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BREAKING OUT THE BIG GUNS

Rolled-up sleeves are making a comeback in the Marine Corps

Page 10

Panel explores link between sex assault, PTSD and suicide

By Chris Carroll
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A fellow Marine drugged and raped him but served no prison time after conviction because the court admired the assailant's 23 years of service, a military sexual assault victim told a Senate committee on Wednesday.

Then it got worse, former Lance Cpl. Jeremiah Arbogast told legislators. He was ostracized at his command and medically retired in 2006 as a result of mental health problems stemming from the attack. Then he was pushed by the Department of Veterans Affairs toward counseling groups full of men damaged by combat trauma.

Among that group, he was afraid to open up about being raped by another man. Suffering from crushing depression and post-traumatic stress, Arbogast felt he had

'I honestly felt like it would be just one more person for me to bare my soul to for no avail.'

airman who is a victim of sexual assault

nowhere to turn except suicide.

"I was thrown away like a piece of garbage," Arbogast testified. "I felt my death would spare my wife, daughter and myself the dishonor the rape brought upon us."

A self-inflicted gunshot wound left him paralyzed below the waist. But today, Arbogast has a will to live and is determined to get the word out about how military sexual assault — reports of which have been rising sharply in recent years — affects the health and welfare of veterans.

SEE LINK ON PAGE 9

AF program a bright spot in military's assault fight

By Nancy Montgomery
Stars and Stripes

After she was raped, she had to describe the attack time after humiliating time in interviews — with investigators, prosecutors, victim advocates and defense attorneys.

Authorities seized her cellphone and were combing through her life, making inquiries about her mental health records and asking about her sexual history. Investigators were contacting her friends and associates.

No one was telling her anything about the status of the case.

It's not an unusual scenario for sexual assault victims in the military. So when one young airman who'd undergone similar treatment and was beginning to despair was told that she could be

provided with a lawyer to represent her — not the Air Force, not the command, just her — in a program called the Special Victims' Counsel, she was skeptical.

"I honestly felt like it would be just one more person for me to bare my soul to for no avail," the airman later wrote in a letter to the SVC. But that's not what happened.

In a military justice system designed to promote good order and discipline, with few concerns about victims' rights, her SVC asked her what she wanted. He advised the airman, who is not named according to Stars and Stripes policy and whose identification was in any case redacted in her letter, provided by the Air Force.

He guided and fought for her.

SEE FIGHT ON PAGE 8

MILITARY
UK, Japan bases to each lose troops in budget
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MLB
Catcher Lucroy emerging as team leader for Brewers
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FACES
No Oscar nod, no problem: Whitaker works on his craft
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Dempsey worries about effects of Afghan withdrawal talk » Page 2

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We can turn the breakfast conversation into a two-horse race."

— Taco Bell President Brian Niccol, on the fast food chain's entry into the breakfast market, noting that Taco Bell intends to be a "strong No. 2" after McDonald's

See story on Page 18

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2. Misawa to lose 500 troops as part of Pentagon budget cuts
3. Navy relieves USS Taylor's commander after ship ran aground
4. Hagel's budget to reshape forces meets with strong opposition
5. Work to turn S. Korea Army post into urban oasis to begin in 2017

COMING SOON

Music

New album from Beck is mellow gold



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MILITARY

Stalled Afghan deal concerns Dempsey

By Lolita C. Baldor
The Associated Press

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — America's top military officer said Wednesday that the impasse over a security agreement between the U.S. and Afghanistan is encouraging the enemy to take bold actions and could lead some Afghan forces to cooperate with the Taliban to "hedge their bets."

Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with his commanders in Afghanistan to assess conditions and reassure them that they should focus on the considerable work they have to do this year and not worry about next year.

Dempsey told The Associated Press in an interview that President Barack Obama's order Tuesday to begin active planning for a total withdrawal was making Afghan military leaders anxious and eating away at their troops' confidence.

Frustrated with Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai, Obama ordered the Pentagon to accelerate planning for a full U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of this year. But Obama is also holding out hope that Afghanistan's next president, to be elected this spring, may eventually sign a stalled security agree-



"There are parts of the country where ... there will ... be some accommodations between the Afghan security forces and the Taliban. I think a delay in the (security agreement) might accelerate those kind of accommodations."

Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

ment that could prevent the U.S. from having to take that step.

Obama spoke Tuesday with Karzai, the first direct conversation between the two presidents since last June. Karzai has refused to sign the pact.

The impasse is having an effect, Dempsey said.

"It is having an effect on the enemy and in some ways I think encourages them, and intelligence supports that," Dempsey told reporters. And, he said, the uncertainty of a continued U.S. presence in Afghanistan may encourage Afghan security forces in some parts of the country to "hedge their bets."

"There are parts of the country where it seems to be, there will — with some likelihood ... be some accommodations between

the Afghan security forces and the Taliban," said Dempsey. "I think a delay in the (security agreement) might accelerate those kind of accommodations. I don't think it will be widespread by the way, but we do have to be alert to that possibility."

He also said expects that the Taliban will become more aggressive during the coming summer fighting season.

For Dempsey, Obama's announcement triggered a day of meetings with his commanders and with hundreds of troops in this eastern Afghanistan base in the shadow of the volatile Pakistan border region to explain what it all means. And he emphasized to them that is does not mean that a zero U.S. force is now a foregone conclusion.

McCain holds up defense nominations over LCS dispute

By Erik Slavin
Stars and Stripes

Sen. John McCain plans to block the nomination of Robert Work to deputy secretary of defense, a decision he announced after clashing with Work over the Navy's newest coastal ship during a confirmation hearing Tuesday in Washington.

The Arizona Republican said he also would block Christine Wormuth, the Obama administration's nomination for undersecretary of defense for policy, after expressing dissatisfaction with her remarks about al-Qaida.

Until last year, McCain's opposition likely would have spelled the end for the nominations. However, Senate rules passed by the Democratic majority last year, dubbed the "nuclear option," allow the majority to end filibusters on most presidential nominees.

McCain, a critic of the Navy's littoral combat ship program, asked Work if he agreed with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's announcement Monday to cut the planned buy of LCSs from 52 — a buy that would have made about one in every six Navy vessels an LCS — down to 32.

Work briefly outlined Hagel's order, which calls for the Navy to consider modifications to the LCS, purchase a different small-sized combatant ship or design a new ship entirely.

The LCS has been criticized for its low levels of armament and survivability, compared to some of the ships it replaces. LCS supporters say the ship's top speed of around 50 mph and shallow draft allow the Navy to patrol waters it can't access very well at the present.

While serving as Navy under-

secretary, Work championed the LCS, even after its initial price went from \$220 million to more than \$450 million on average.

Work then began to say that modifications to programs were "very normal with Navy shipbuilding" when McCain cut him off.

"You think it's normal?" McCain asked. "You think it's normal that the cost overruns associated with this ship, the fact that we don't even know what the mission is, that there's been this whole idea of moving different modules off and on, you disagree with the General Accountability Office statement and the cost overruns? This is normal, Mr. Work?"

McCain later said that he was stunned that Work hadn't read a GAO report on the ship program.

McCain added that objective observers of the program agreed that it "has not been anywhere near what it was presented to Congress by funding."

"This, again, makes me wonder about your qualifications because the one thing we are plagued with is significant cost overruns and lack of capability," he said.

McCain's grilling of Wormuth grew testy when he repeatedly asked her an "either-or" question: "Is the threat of al-Qaida receding or growing?"

"Senator, I would describe it as a persistent threat," Wormuth replied.

"So you won't answer the question, is that it? It's a simple question," McCain responded.

McCain later told reporters that the nominees' responses were "not only naive but nonsensical," according to media reports. He conceded that the Senate's new rules made it unlikely that the pair wouldn't be confirmed, but that he planned on bringing up the nomination holds on the Senate floor anyway.

Work is a retired Marine colonel and former think tank analyst whose nomination was generally considered uncontroversial until the committee hearing, according to several reports.

Wormuth was appointed the deputy undersecretary of defense for strategy, plans and force development in 2012.

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Correction

A Feb. 26 story about the commander of the USS Taylor being relieved after the frigate ran aground misspelled the name of the ship's interim commanding officer. He is Cmdr. Chris Cigna.

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MILITARY

NATO plans for early Afghan exit

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — NATO defense ministers will discuss plans for a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 should Afghanistan and the U.S. fail to reach agreement on a key long-term security deal, the alliance's top official said Wednesday.

"This is not our preferred outcome. But these are the facts — facts that we need to take into account in our planning," NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said at the start of a two-day ministerial meeting in Brussels.

Rasmussen's comments echoed those of President Barack Obama, who on Tuesday informed Afghan President Hamid Karzai by phone about U.S. plans for a possible exit at the end of the year.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the Pentagon would "move ahead with additional contingency planning to ensure adequate plans and in place to accomplish an orderly withdrawal by the end of the year should the United States not keep any troops in Afghanistan after 2014."

'If there is no agreement [between the U.S. and Afghanistan], there will be no NATO troops in Afghanistan after 2014.'

Anders Fogh Rasmussen

NATO secretary-general

al-Qaida remnants, has been complicated by Karzai's refusal to sign a security deal.

Without a Bilateral Security Agreement between Kabul and Washington, NATO would have no choice but to follow the U.S. out of Afghanistan, Rasmussen said.

"If the Bilateral Security Agreement between the United States and Afghanistan is not signed, there will be no NATO Status of Forces Agreement with Afghanistan. And if there is no agreement, there will be no NATO troops in Afghanistan after 2014," Rasmussen said.

The U.S. and NATO have not set a deadline for reaching a security agreement that would grant international troops immunity from the Afghan judicial system. But continued delays in concluding the accord will increase the chances of a full pull out, according to U.S. officials.

In 2011, Baghdad's refusal to grant similar immunity to U.S. troops scuttled talks with Washington, leading to a complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq.

With Karzai unlikely to sign the agreement, NATO and the U.S. must now wait until April when Afghanistan holds its elections. "It appears that President Karzai is not ready to sign a security agreement," Rasmussen said. "We're ready to engage with a new president after the presidential elections."

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SARAH MATTISON/Courtesy of the U.S. Air National

Army Staff Sgt. Bradley Cormier, a supply sergeant with the Army Mountain Warfare School inventories newly received Army Mountaineering Kits at the Ethan Allen Firing Range in Jericho, Vt., on Feb. 19.

Soldiers getting new mountain climbing gear

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Army this week started handing out more than \$11 million in new mountain-climbing gear to U.S. troops, who count on the equipment to move across rough terrain in places such as Afghanistan.

For years, the Army's inventory of climbing equipment has focused on utility, meaning soldiers were equipped with items such as carabiners that were plenty strong, but also plenty heavy.

Since 2007, however, engineers at the Project Executive Office Soldier program have been testing equipment used by sport climbers with a view to upgrading the combat gear. As a result, soldiers will now be traversing cliffs and crags with the same ropes, harnesses, carabiners, crampons, ice axes, avalanche transceivers and rock anchors used by mountain climbers throughout the world.

The only difference is that the Army's new equipment — which includes brands such as Black Diamond, Misty Mountain and Pelican, to name a few — comes in more subdued color schemes.

Product Manager Soldier Clothing and Individual Equipment engineer Darren Bean, a former mountain warfare instructor and recreational climber, helped select the new gear, which is certified by the In-

ternational Climbing and Mountaineering Federation.

"It is my job to keep abreast of what is out there in the mountaineering world," Bean said. "We tested every item out there to get to this point."

Mountaineering skills are used regularly by troops in Afghanistan to move across rough terrain, deliver supplies and set up observation posts. Personnel have used climbing skills to search wells, tunnels and caves for hidden weapons caches and to disarm bombs placed on highway overpasses, Bean said.

The new gear was fielded last week at the Army Mountain Warfare School in Vermont, which trains 600 to 700 personnel each year.

"Increased mobility in mountainous regions is definitely a combat multiplier," said 1st Sgt. Nate Chipman, an instructor at the school.

The gear is divided into kits that allow infantry platoons to climb in urban terrain and over rock, snow and ice. There's also a kit for Special Forces troops with advanced mountaineering skills.

Chipman said he's used ropes, hauling systems and techniques taught at the Mountain Warfare School to move equipment in high terrain and through snow in Afghanistan.

On one patrol, he helped hoist an injured

soldier off a ridge at 10,000 feet, he said.

"This gear has been used time and again overseas to get the job done," he said.

The climbing gear allows the Army to move personnel, equipment and supplies without helicopters, which can be grounded by weather or might alert the enemy to an operation, according to officials.

The Mountain Warfare School's commander, Lt. Col. John Guyette, said the new gear was developed as a response to the challenges faced by troops making do with older equipment in combat zones.

The new equipment will help troops move casualties in rough terrain, Guyette said, noting that the school developed a rough terrain evacuation course after a soldier bled to death in a ravine because a helicopter couldn't reach his position.

About 80 percent of the newly issued items are also contained in the Marine Corps' Assault Climber Kit, so soldiers and Marines will be able to work together if they find themselves climbing the same slope in a war zone.

The gear will be sent to mountain warfare training centers in Colorado, Alaska, Vermont and Georgia first, but starting next month, active-duty brigade combat teams and National Guard units will also get the new equipment.

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US quietly whittles down detainees in Afghanistan

By ADAM GOLDMAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The United States has quietly begun to whittle down the population of detainees it holds at a military prison in Afghanistan, but it is struggling over what to do with less than a dozen of these non-Afghan nationals who are regarded as particularly dangerous, U.S. officials said.

This small group of foreign detainees has vexed U.S. officials for years, but the issue has become more pressing as a full U.S. combat withdrawal from Afghanistan looms.

The Afghan authorities have said they will not continue to hold any foreign detain-

ees. The inmates' home countries either do not want them or cannot provide security guarantees about their future behavior that satisfies the United States. And bringing some of them to the United States for trial in a military commission, an option being considered by the Obama administration, could run into political opposition or may be stymied by a lack of court-ready evidence.

Two detainees from Saudi Arabia were repatriated this month. In November, a Palestinian was sent to a country in the Middle East that officials did not identify. Two other detainees, thought to be Pakistani, were recently determined to be Afghans and turned over to President Hamid Kar-

zai's government, the officials said.

The transfers bring the number of foreign detainees at the Parwan Detention Facility near Bagram Air Field to 49, down from 54 in November.

U.S. officials expect to continue repatriating or resettling detainees, but they said there are no easy options for a subset of inmates suspected of serious war crimes or regarded as a continuing terrorist threat.

The Justice Department and the Pentagon were supposed to make recommendations this month on which detainees to prosecute. Officials said the number of people being looked at for prosecution in the single digits.

PACIFIC

Report: N. Korea antics fortify US ties with South

By ASHLEY ROWLAND
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea's continued desire to push the military and diplomatic envelope has only helped to strengthen ties between the U.S. and South Korea, a new congressional report says.

Just last week, a North Korean boat crossed the disputed maritime boundary known as the Northern Limit Line. According to the Congressional Research Service, these types of provocations — which include a third nuclear test in February 2013, and the withdrawal of North Korean workers from the Kaesong Industrial Complex last April — have led to increased cooperation between the U.S. and South Korea, to the point that Washington is comfortable with South Korean President Park Geun-hye's confidence-building approach to inter-Korean relations.

Those provocations followed "extremely close" collaboration since 2009 over North Korea, following several years of differing approaches on how to handle Pyongyang.

"The experience of this close coordination in 2013 appears to have deepened the reservoir of trust between the two govern-

ments, to the point that the Obama Administration appears comfortable with letting Park take the lead in trying to encourage more cooperative behavior from Pyongyang," the CRS report said.

Park, who took office in February 2013 and vowed to aggressively respond to North Korean attacks, has implemented a "trust-politik" strategy with Pyongyang that separates humanitarian assistance to the North from political developments, and emphasizes a combination of toughness and flexibility in Seoul's dealings with the North.

Her approach also includes "modest" confidence-building measures such as holding reunions between family members separated by the Korean War during periods when North Korea moderates its behavior, the report said.

The release of the CRS report came just days before a North Korean naval vessel crossed the disputed Northern Limit Line, the maritime border between the two Koreas, on the first day of the annual U.S.-South Korean Key Resolve and Foal Eagle military drills.

According to South Korea's Ministry of National Defense, the 420-ton North Korean patrol ship crossed the NLL three times

between 10:56 p.m. Monday and 12:25 a.m. Tuesday, west of Yeonpyeong Island, the site of a 2010 North Korean shelling that killed four people.

South Korean military ships instructed the North Korean ship to leave the area and there were no further incidents.

There has been very little response from the South Korean government on the incident. An MND spokesman, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, said the boat appeared to have purposely crossed the boundary.

He also said the exercises would not be altered because of the incident, and that South Korean troops had not been put on any special alerts.

U.S. Forces Korea would not address whether officials believe the incursions were intentional, or how serious of a threat they pose, saying by email that it "does not discuss operational or intelligence matters."

The military also would not comment on whether the ongoing joint exercises were being affected, or whether forces were being put on alert.

The CRS report, released last Thursday, provides a wide-ranging assessment of issues affecting the relationship between the two countries, including the security

threat posed by the North.

It said that poor relations between the two Koreas since 2008 have helped Washington and Seoul overlook differences in their top priorities for the peninsula — for the U.S., denuclearization, and for South Korea, reunification.

A potential source of disagreement is whether the Obama administration and the U.S. Congress will support Park's future initiatives with the North. For instance, the report notes that while Park has expressed a desire to internationalize and expand Kaesong, such a move could conflict with congressional efforts to increase U.S. sanctions against the North.

The report also noted that planned South Korean defense budget increases have slowed significantly during the tenures of Park and her predecessor, Lee Myung-bak.

And while the two countries signed a new five-year defense burden-sharing agreement last month, South Korean opposition groups remain worried that the U.S. may use some of those Special Measures Agreement funds to finance the expansion of Camp Humphreys, even though SMA funds are earmarked for other uses.

SMA funds are intended to offset

the cost of stationing U.S. troops in South Korea, and the latest agreement includes new measures intended to increase transparency of U.S. use of those funds.

The Humphreys expansion is the centerpiece of a massive plan to relocate U.S. Forces Korea troops to regional hubs. The relocation has been repeatedly delayed since its initial target date of 2008 due to slow construction and what the CRS described as "South Korean protests of financial difficulties in paying the ROK (South Korean) share of the relocation costs."

The move is now scheduled to take place in 2016, though the CRS report said that "some individuals involved with the move speculate that it will not be completed until 2020."

The report said that while South Koreans are generally supportive of the U.S.-South Korea alliance, they may resent U.S. influence and the possibility of being linked to U.S. policies that irritate neighboring China. Seoul is also wary of Japan's proposed effort to expand its military, a move supported by the United States.

Stars and Stripes' Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this story.
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THE NEW SANNO

MILITARY

Ties tested as US blasts Uganda for anti-gay law

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — As the U.S. reviews its partnership with Uganda after the African nation's adoption of sweeping anti-gay legislation, policymakers are now in the difficult position of trying to support the Obama administration's tough talk while maintaining an alliance with a key player in U.S. counterterrorism efforts around the Horn of Africa, experts say.

Secretary of State John Kerry sharply criticized Ugandan officials on Monday because of the new law.

"This is a tragic day for Uganda and for all who care about the cause of human rights," he said. "Ultimately, the only answer is repeal of this law. As President [Barack] Obama stated, this legislation is not just morally wrong, it complicates a valued relationship."

Kerry said the U.S. has begun an internal review "to ensure that all dimensions of our engagement, including assistance programs,

uphold our anti-discrimination policies and principles and reflect our values."

Uganda has been a key U.S. partner in the region. Areas of collaboration include U.S. training for Ugandan troops to conduct missions in Somalia, where the Islamic militant group al-Shabab controlled large swaths of the country at one time. Al-Shabab has since been pushed out of key strongholds in Somalia, largely thanks to African Union forces.

The Ugandan military has also been in the lead for security operations in the Central African Republic, working alongside U.S. special operations forces in the hunt for the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group led by Joseph Kony.

With the relationship now under review, it is unclear how far the U.S. will go to punish Uganda for passing legislation that criminalizes homosexuality.

"Currently, there are no plans to cancel ongoing or planned engagement with Uganda," said Tom Saunders, an Africa Com-

mand spokesman, who referred questions about future policy decisions to the State Department.

Will Stevens, a State Department spokesman, said: "We are conducting a review of our relationship with Uganda now, but are not in a position to speculate on what specific actions we may or may not take."

But downgrading cooperation with Uganda's military would be a way to send a signal to the leadership in the country, said J. Peter Pham, director of the Atlantic Council's Africa Center. However, he said, the Obama administration should avoid cutting humanitarian aid and development assistance.

"The Obama administration has no choice but to take some concrete action, not only because it would be the right thing to do from the ethical and public-health-policy points of view, but because U.S. credibility is on the line," Pham said in an email.

For several years, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has ignored U.S. concerns on a number of issues, Pham said, in-



STEPHEN WANDERA/AP

Anti-gay activist Pastor Martin Ssemua posts a public notice offering "rehabilitation" for homosexuals at Uganda's National Theatre in Kampala, Uganda, on Tuesday.

cluding treatment of political opponents after peaceful protests over the economy in 2011 and the presence of Ugandan troops in South Sudan.

"Military assistance is the one area where the U.S. has options," Pham said. "[T]he Ugandan People's Defence Force remains one of the few bastions of professionalism in the country, and its leadership is about the only check on Museveni and his ambitions to impose his son as a successor; hence, a shot across the UPDF's bow might get some attention from those best positioned to get the president's attention."

Some experts, however, say that military ties are unlikely to

be cut.

"I would expect the State Department — which since 2009 has made LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights a priority in bilateral relations — is trying to find alternate ways to pressure Uganda and express its displeasure," wrote Mark Leon Goldberg, managing editor of the United Nations-sponsored UN Dispatch website in a Monday posting called "Why the USA Can't Just Cut Aid to Uganda."

There are about 80 countries that have laws criminalizing homosexuality. The U.S. maintains alliances with many of them, including Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Nigeria.

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MILITARY

Air Force announces troop cuts at Japan, UK bases

By Travis J. Tritten
Stars and Stripes

Personnel reductions at Misawa Air Base in Japan and RAF Menwith Hill Station in the United Kingdom may provide an early preview of the cost-cutting budget priorities unveiled by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel this week.

Misawa, located on the northern tip of Japan's main island, will trim 500 troops from its intelligence-gathering units — about 14 percent of the total military workforce — over the next 15 years, Air Force officials said Wednesday. The move is part of Hagel's effort to create a "more fiscally conservative and efficient" Defense Department.

At Menwith Hill, about 500 U.S. military and civilian positions will be eliminated, according to a statement Wednesday from U.S. European Command.

On Monday, Hagel gave a first showing of a proposed defense budget for the coming year that would focus on cost-saving technology, whittle the Army to its smallest size in about 75 years, and reduce ballooning military pay and benefits costs.

The initiatives have triggered outcry from Congress, veteran groups and servicemembers who are concerned U.S. defense could be hobbled and earned benefits could be unfairly stripped. It's also led some military watchers to wonder what the proposed cuts could mean to previously announced plans to shift the U.S. military focus to the Pacific region.

"The U.S. Department of Defense is currently realigning the workforce around the globe by employing enabling technologies and combining similar mission activities worldwide," Capt. Kerry Leverett, spokesman for the 35th Fighter Wing at Misawa, wrote in a statement Wednesday. The cuts authorized by Hagel will stretch across three services at Misawa but focus primarily on intelligence operations, according to Leverett.

Elements will be deactivated or reassigned in the Air Force's 373rd Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group; the Air Force's 373rd Support Squadron; the Air Force's 301st Intelligence Squadron; the Navy Information Operations Command-Misawa; and the Army's 708th Military Intelligence Detachment.

Leverett said the United States discussed the force-reduction plan with Japan — a key security pact partner in the increasingly important Pacific region — before implementing the decision. Both governments said they do not believe the change will affect the security situation here.

"The U.S. personnel reduction in no way affects the United States in Japan alliance, which remains a cornerstone of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region," Leverett wrote to Stars and Stripes.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs sounded no alarms Wednesday,

Planned trims irk servicemembers overseas

By Trevor Andersen, James Kimmer and Eric Guzman
Stars and Stripes

Cuts announced by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel this week aren't going down well with military personnel serving overseas.

Caps on pay raises, higher commissary prices, housing allowance cuts and reduced health insurance benefits for dependents and retirees are some of the proposals advanced by Hagel in an effort to meet tough budget targets set by Congress.

It's no surprise, then, that the measures aren't popular with servicemembers and their families.

Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Toomer, a contracting noncommissioned officer with the 409th Contracting Support Brigade in Kaiserslautern, Germany, noted that as



Toomer

the number of American troops in Germany has increased, the number of American troops in Germany has increased, the number of American troops in Germany has increased.

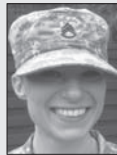
"How about leading by example?" Toomer said. The Army would take the brunt of cuts under Hagel's proposal, losing an additional 40,000 to 50,000 soldiers beyond reductions in the works.

The service is already shedding 80,000 soldiers. In doing so, it is shifting standards to cut soldiers deemed fit to serve in Iraq or Afghanistan but not fit enough to continue serving now that they aren't needed to deploy.

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Allison

Sgt. Ashley Allison, a vocalist with the U.S. Army Europe Band, said.

But for many, especially those in the Army, it's Hagel's proposed cuts to pay and benefits that have caused the most concern.

Among other things, Hagel's proposal would trim domestic housing allowances to cover 95 percent rather than 100 percent of living expenses; slash the subsidy to military supermarkets, adding an average of more than \$10 to the typical grocery bill; and cap pay raises at 1 percent, which would reduce servicemembers' buying power if inflation exceeds that mark.

"I think our pay should go up as inflation goes up," Airman 1st Class Aaron Mullins, a communications technician at Yokota Air Base, Japan, said. "They are starting to take away all my incentives to stay in for retirement."

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Tim Macaspac, at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, said the plans were unfair.

"Dependents need that money to survive, and their paycheck isn't always going to cut it," he said. "Our benefits are how our government shows how much they care for us."

Senior Airman Julian Burton, a medical technician at Yokota Air Base, said the cuts will likely hit air men with families the hardest.

"If you have to think about your family, it affects you as a person, you can't really do your job when you're worried about these sorts of things," he said.

The move to increase commissary prices is particularly unpopular with overseas personnel.

"If they are going to increase prices it's going to be hard on the military," Mullins said. "The commissary is so convenient, but if they put up all the prices there is no need for me to go there. I will just go to Wal-Mart."

they're double," Toomer said. "Hopefully

[the Army] does the right thing and removes the right people ... and handles it appropriately," Staff

Frieman Apprentice Stephanie Buttrick, a Yokosuka sailor, said commissary price rises could have a big impact on her.

Junior enlisted sailors' paychecks don't cover their expenses, she said. "It's hard on us," she said. "When you're just out of boot camp, you have to buy a lot of things. I just spent \$80 on patches, and I was just told I had to buy food and extra toiletries before I get underway."

Military spouses are equally concerned.

Yokota Air Force spouse Ashley Faye said her family is about to take a second overseas tour for the extra pay.

"If the commissaries overseas are hit by these cuts, there's very little reason to ever want to be there," she said. "It's already expensive enough as it is living here."

Yokota military spouse Nina Smith said the commissary cuts will hit lower-paid airmen the hardest.

"I haven't been military all my life, so the prices won't be a shock to me, but for people that have been in the military for a while, it'll be a shock for them," she said.

Erika Brown, the wife of an enlisted airman at Yokota, said raising Tricare health insurance rates would be "another broken promise."

The mother of two school-age children said she'd use the Japanese medical system if Tricare rates go up too much.

Barton, the medical technician, said he doesn't like the cuts but understands why they are being made. "I don't know if the cuts need to be this extreme, but I understand where they're coming from," he said.

The Defense Department is dealing with the effect of billions in budget cuts imposed by Congress in an effort to rein in government spending.

Mullins, the communications technician, said he'd consider leaving the service if things weren't but says he's still positive about the military's future.

"What makes the American people great is our ingenuity and our ability to solve our problems," he said.

Stars and Stripes reporters Matt Millham and Eric Brown in Germany contributed to this report. andersen.trevor@stars.com guzman.eric@stars.com kimmer.james@stars.com

spending next year to \$496 billion, which is \$45 billion less than White House forecasts. Meanwhile, Hagel pointed to the continuing specter of sequestration as driving the need for force reductions.

There was no immediate word Wednesday in South Korea, where the U.S. has maintained one of its largest overseas military presences in support of the uneasy armistice that ended the Korean War. The country's Ministry of National Defense had not publicly commented on the DOD's proposed budget cuts. However, a ministry spokesman said he believed U.S. troop levels in South Korea would not be affected.

The spokesman said the U.S. has given past reassurances that sequestration would not lead to a reduction in forces or military equipment in South Korea. The official spoke to Stars and Stripes on the customary condition of anonymity.

Still, the proposal to slim the defense budget comes at an uncertain time in the region.

Asia-Pacific countries are now watching whether Washington will make good on promises to beef up its military presence and relationships, said Ralph Cossa, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Hawaii.

The U.S. needs to continue to show its flag throughout the Pacific despite the budget cuts, Cossa said.

"People are going to be watching closely to make sure that is the case," he said. "The first time a major exercise gets canceled or scaled back, people will say, 'Here's the proof that they weren't serious about the rebalance.'"

Ross Babbage, a former Australian assistant defense secretary, said he was reassured that production of a new long-range bomber, the Joint Strike Fighter and a new aerial tanker would be spared from the budget axe, but he added: "There's some serious questioning of U.S. resolve at the moment."

It's important to U.S. allies in the Pacific that whatever results from the defense budget cuts doesn't lead to more debate about the rebalance.

"It is important for allies, neutrals and potential hostiles that they don't get the impression that the U.S. is weakening or going away," Babbage said.

Stars and Stripes reporters Seth Robson, Ashley Rowland, Yoo Kyong Chang, Chiyomi Sumida and Adam Watts contributed to this story. tritten.travis@stars.com

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"We love to say yes"

Anxious troops ask Hagel for budget clarity

By JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, Va. — A day after unveiling a preview of next year's defense budget, which calls for reductions in compensation and large cuts to troop levels, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was bombarded with questions by anxious servicemembers concerned about the impact of the changes.

Hagel pushed back strongly against the implied criticism, and defended the budgetary decisions as necessary in a time of strategic change and fiscal austerity.

A soldier asked Hagel about the risks of going down to pre-World War II troop levels. Hagel announced Monday that the Pentagon wants to further decrease the size of the active-duty Army to about 440,000 troops.

"I think it's really a bogus comparison to compare the Army of pre-World War II in the United States versus the Army today," Hagel said. "Look at the capability difference — what per person you are trained to do, what you're equipped to do, how you're led, the equipment that you have, the modernization, the technology versus what our Army looked like in 1929 and 1940. I mean, there's no comparison ... Many other parts of that comparison I don't think could stand any true test of anything."

Hagel told airmen that the proposed force reductions fit a natural historical pattern.

"This is not new, the reduction in forces ... At the end of every war that this country has ever been in, that's the way it works," he said. "If you're not in a war, your [manpower] requirements are different ... We're out of Iraq, we're coming out of Afghanistan."

Hagel told the soldiers that keeping higher troop levels would degrade the quality of the force because compensation for the additional soldiers would crowd out important warfighting investments.

"We cannot allow a so-called hollow force or too many members just to ... say that we've got so many members," he said. "That's not fair to the members who stay in ... We don't have an unlimited bin of resources here that we can't continue to keep everybody trained and compensated. This is what's referred to often as the hollow force. You have a lot of people and you can even compensate them, but at some point you're going to have to invest big dollars in the technological edge that we have had since World War II over any adversary ... We never, ever must let that erode."

A soldier asked Hagel how the military could continue to recruit and retain high-quality people if compensation and benefits were cut.

"Why did you decide to [join the military]?" Hagel asked. "I doubt if it's for the pay or the compensation and the benefits and even the glory. You [are] volunteering for something more important than that."

Hagel went through the proposed pay and benefits cutbacks that were unveiled Monday, and provided additional details.

In an effort to slow compensation growth, the Pentagon wants

to do the following to reduce personnel costs:

■ Basic pay for servicemembers would rise by only 1 percent in fiscal 2015, and pay increases could be as low as 0.5 percent in future years.

■ Cut housing subsidies by 5 percent over the course of a few years, from 100 percent to 95 percent. Hagel said that in the late 1990s, servicemembers paid up to 20 percent of their housing costs

out-of-pocket.

■ Cut commissaries subsidy from \$1.4 billion annually to \$400 million. Overseas commissaries and those in remote locations will continue receiving direct subsidies. "We're not closing any commissaries," Hagel said.

■ Increase Tricare co-pays for working-age military retirees and family members of active-duty servicemembers over the next five years. Hagel said the average

co-pay for retirees today is 8 percent, but that needs to increase to 11 percent. Hagel did not specify how much co-pays would increase for family members of active-duty servicemembers. "It wouldn't change the quality [of your health care]," he said. Disabled veterans would be exempted from any co-pay increases, according to Hagel.

DOD will wait until the congressional empaneled Retirement

Commission presents its report before making any recommendations about changes in retirement benefits. But Hagel promised that any reductions in this area would be not apply to people who have already joined the military.

The Pentagon is also proposing another round of base closures, a process known as BRAC, to save money.

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8 12	BMW	335i Sedan	\$ 42,900	\$ 39,995	\$ 2,905
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10 12	Ford	Mustang	\$ 21,975	\$ 19,495	\$ 2,480
11 08	Ford	Edge	\$ 16,650	\$ 14,495	\$ 2,155
12 10	Ford	Explorer Eddie Bauer	\$ 25,125	\$ 22,995	\$ 2,130
13 11	Jeep	Liberty	\$ 20,100	\$ 17,995	\$ 2,105
14 09	Ford	F 150 XLT 4WD	\$ 28,100	\$ 25,995	\$ 2,105
15 11	BMW	535xi Sedan	\$ 45,075	\$ 42,995	\$ 2,080
16 10	Ford	Fusion Sport	\$ 18,075	\$ 15,995	\$ 2,080
17 10	Toyota	4Runner SR5 4WD	\$ 31,725	\$ 29,995	\$ 1,730
18 10	BMW	M6 Convertible	\$ 61,525	\$ 59,995	\$ 1,530
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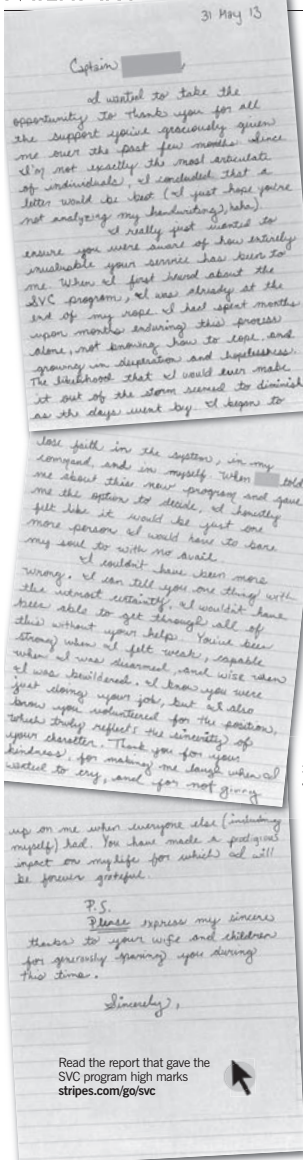
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MILITARY



Read the report that gave the SVC program high marks
stripes.com/go/svc

Fight: Program didn't receive warm welcome by all

FROM FRONT PAGE

"You've been strong when I felt weak, capable when I was disarmed, and wise when I was bewildered," she wrote in the letter after the accused was convicted. "I will be forever grateful."

Air Force officials say the SVC program, now operating for a year, has been a singular success in aiding victims and restoring confidence in the criminal justice system. Those goals have been elusive in the services, despite nearly a decade of initiatives: victim advocates, sexual assault response coordinators, restricted reporting, more training for investigators and prosecutors.

But SARCs and victims' advocates aren't legally trained, and, for all their victim support, work essentially for the command. Prosecutors, likewise, work for the Air Force. Sympathetic or not, their duty is to prosecute and win cases. Further, they can't give victims legal advice, such as telling them they don't have to answer an improper question from a defense attorney.

SVCs, on the other hand, are duty-bound to work for no one but the victim, just as defense attorneys work for the accused.

"I make them feel that they're not being pushed around by the system, that their rights are being respected," said Capt. Aaron Kirk, at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. "I give them back some sense of control."

Providing support

Six months after the program began as a pilot in January 2013, 392 victims of sexual assault — all treated as victims, not "alleged" victims — had requested an SVC, after hearing about the program from a victim advocate or through outreach efforts.

In a survey of 27 victims whose cases were concluded, 94 percent said they were extremely satisfied with the advice and support their SVC provided, according to September evaluation of the program.

Victims said they were satisfied with their SVCs even though SVCs were unable to travel to meet with clients in person, working over the phone or in teleconferences and sometimes not until late in the process.

They were satisfied even though more than half the cases didn't go to court-martial, and were resolved with administrative actions, non-judicial punishment discharges or no action at all. Of the cases that did proceed to court-martial, 18 percent ended in acquittal.

One of Kirk's clients saw the two airmen she had accused of sexually assaulting her acquitted — and endured a "horrendous" experience, he said: double the usual number of interviews, two Article 32 hearings, proceedings that Congress deter-

mined last year needed revision because they were prone to violating federally guaranteed rules protecting privacy rights of sexual-assault victims.

Still, Kirk said his advocacy for her, when he was assigned after the Article 32, made her feel like she had someone on her side, someone powerful, who stood up for her.

"She said it meant the world to her," he said. "I just received a call from her mother, just to thank me."

What victims want

The early statistics and anecdotal evidence helped persuade the Defense Department to mandate that all the services have similar programs up and running by last month. SVC program requirements also were included in this year's National Defense Authorization Act, part of an expansion of victims' rights in military law.

As described in a September evaluation report, SVC advocacy took many forms. SVCs persuaded commanders to allow transfers or forgo disciplining victims for violating fraternization rules, had retaliatory negative comments removed from performance reviews, had personnel who violated confidentiality rules removed from cases and retrieved clients' cell phones from investigators who'd taken them for evidence and refused to return them. They secured client transfers, even when commanders initially disapproved them and got protective orders.

They argued in motions to prevent disclosure of victims' journal, mental health records and sexual histories. Sometimes they persuaded commanders to send a case to court-martial despite an investigating officer's recommendation to dismiss it.

By last month, the number of victims requesting SVCs had increased by a third, said Col. Dawn Hankins, who heads the program and its 24 SVCs and 10 paralegals at 22 bases worldwide. Hankins said she plans to add five more lawyers this year to keep up with demand.

SVCs have also advocated for investigations to be dropped, or for commanders not to bring charges.

"There's so much scrutiny and pressure on the military to hold offenders accountable," Hankins said.

"The reality is there are some victims who don't want to participate in the process and will never want to participate. Their privacy is more important to them than seeing their offender put in jail."

"Part of our role is to find out what does the victim want, and then to help them get to where they need to be," she said. "If we can increase victims' trust and confidence in the system, we hope they'll be more willing to report and hold more offenders accountable."

That's how it worked for one of Capt. Natasha Fitzsimmons' clients, who wanted no part in the prosecution of an airman accused of assaulting her and another woman.

But prosecutors and the command were understandably intent on having her testify.

Fitzsimmons, an SVC at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., asked for a meeting with the convening authority to discuss

her client's wishes. A teleconference was arranged with the lieutenant general.

"He listened to her concerns. He was very respectful and kind," Fitzsimmons said.

"He ultimately ordered her to appear and to testify," she said. "But she really felt like her voice was heard at the highest level."

Facing resistance

Groups that advocate for sexual assault victims and long have severe critics of the military justice system laud the program.

"The Special Victim Command program is a huge success," Nancy Parrish, president of the advocacy group Protect Our Defendants, said in an email. "We praise the Air Force for leading the way by creating, and then defending the program."

The program faced fierce opposition from defense attorneys who said the presence of SVCs in the process sapped the deck against the accused and violated the constitutional right to a fair trial. Fitzsimmons pointed out that defense lawyers have learned that when a victim wants the charges dropped, "the SVC can be your friend."

Many commanders, prosecutors and judges greeted the significant change in the system — one with few precedents and few rules in place — with hostility, skepticism or bafflement.

Hearings continued to take place without SVC notification; SVCs were told their schedules could not be accommodated.

Shortly after the program began, an Air Force judge presiding over a rape case ruled that the SVC, who had sought to argue against allowing his client's sexual and mental health history into evidence, had "no standing" and could not make arguments or speak on the victim's behalf.

But in July, the military's highest court overturned that decision.

The Court of Appeals of the Armed Forces decided that "a reasonable opportunity to be heard at a hearing includes the right to present facts and legal argument, and that a victim or patient who is represented by counsel be heard through counsel."

How military judges and others interpret that remains to be seen.

And a remaining issue is how much information about cases — discovery — can and should be provided to SVCs to help them advise clients. Some prosecutors and military judges have been supportive and provided the materials. Other have not. Starting this year, however, SVCs must be provided all the evidence presented at Article 32s.

Resistance to the SVCs has diminished, Hankins and others said, although for the lawyers it can still be uncomfortable.

Capt. Maribel Jarzabek, a Ramstein Air Base SVC whose advocacy for a client criticized a higher-ranking JAG for anti-victim bias and resulted in the retirement of a lieutenant general — said sometimes she worried about her career.

"I have to keep remembering whom is my client and whose interests I am zealously advocating for everyday: the victim," she said.

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JOE GROMELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Former Marine Lance Cpl. Jeremiah J. Arbogast emphasizes a point during his closing statement at Tuesday's Senate hearing on sexual assault at the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

Link: Senators hear testimony from military assault victims

FROM FRONT PAGE

His testimony came in a Senate hearing Wednesday chaired by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., to explore links between military sexual assault, PTSD and suicide.

Reams of studies document increased rates of mental health problems, substance abuse and suicide among sexual assault victims, a panel of Defense Department and VA officials told legislators.

Gillibrand is the driving force behind an effort to fundamentally change the way the military prosecutes serious crimes, in order to shield sexual assault victims from what she and supporters describe as widespread command bias and intimidation.

Currently, Pentagon statistics indicate fewer than 20 percent of victims report sexual crimes.

Gillibrand's bill, the Military Justice Improvement Act, would take authority over prosecution of cases that could result in more than a year in prison away from commanders, and deposit it with independent military prosecutors.

Another victim, former Pfc. Jessica Kenyon, said the current system means victims aren't just subject to bias from the top commander, but from many levels.

Superiors ranging from sergeants to a lieutenant colonel led to her and made life miserable after she reported sexual assault,

‘This good soldier defense has no place in determining the outcome of these defenses.’

Sen. Kelly Ayotte
R-N.H.

she said.

"It was instance after instance of a failed system in which I became ostracized, singled out, publicly shamed, disciplined for getting treatment and treated as though I was the one who did something wrong," she said.

A bipartisan majority of senators have said they support Gillibrand's initiative, but not enough to clear the 60-vote majority needed to bypass a filibuster.

Sen. Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., told the two victims he believes commanders must be made to exercise authority in prosecutions responsibly rather than being stripped of it.

"From my point of view, this is a problem that will never be solved if you tell the commander this is no longer your problem," he said.

Among a number of new measures passed by Congress to help victims is a requirement that prosecution decisions be pushed higher in the chain of command, and that only top service branch

officials can decide not to follow recommendations to prosecute.

Powerful members of the Senate Armed Services Committee from within Gillibrand's own party also side with the Pentagon in opposing the overhaul of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including committee chairman Carl Levin, D-Mich. and Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo.

While pointing to numerous changes that have been made to better take care of victims, opponents call Gillibrand's bill a bridge too far. Stripping commanders of authority would badly impact the maintenance of good order and discipline in the military, they say.

McCaskill has presented statistics from other nations' militaries that have removed prosecutions from the chain of command, and says doing so has not increased victims' willingness to report crimes.

The former prosecutor said she believes commanders, who don't

care about military prosecutors' win-loss ratios, might be more likely to prosecute cases with marginal evidence that professional prosecutors themselves would be.

"There's a disagreement here," McCaskill told reporters earlier this month. "We do not believe that her bill will protect victims. We do not believe that it will result in more prosecutions. We do not believe it will increase reporting. And we believe there's real workability problems in terms of how quickly these cases will be brought to court."

McCaskill and another opponent of Gillibrand's bill, Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., told Arbogast they intended to move to prevent military courts from letting troops off lightly in sexual assault cases because of past service records.

"This good soldier defense has no place in determining the outcome of these defenses," Ayotte said.

Arbogast said Congress must act to change the culture around sexual assault prosecutions.

"The belief system about rape must change with in the armed forces," he said. "And [it] will only change when the perpetrators are consistently prosecuted and no longer given leniency in their sentencing by their commanders."

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County jail opens unit for veterans

The Associated Press

LAND O'LAKES, Fla. — The Pasco County Jail now has a housing unit dedicated to military veterans.

The unit, which holds 32 inmates, opened last week. It will offer a range of services for veterans, including counseling, rehabilitation, job placement, life skills and outreach programs.

The idea came from Capt. Ray Revell, who heads of a similar program during a 10-week leadership training trip to FBI headquarters in Quantico, Va., in 2012.

"We want to help some of these guys get their pride and integrity back," Revell said. "A lot of them suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Some have substance abuse problems. Others are homeless."

For Sheriff Chris Nocco, the veterans' unit is an example of a transforming jail.

"We're changing the jail in that this is no longer just about housing, this is about transforming people to be who they used to be before they committed a crime or fell into issues with substance abuse or mental health issues," Nocco said.

The program, he said, offers a way for veterans to get back on their feet.

"They served their country; they have proven to us as a nation that they can do the right thing. This is about an opportunity for them to lift themselves up, back on their feet again, and be productive members of society," he said.

Some inmates are buying in to the program.

I guess you can say it's the camaraderie," said Jerry Arnette, a former member of the Navy. "Being in here, everyone is military. You can talk about your service. You can talk about issues you have had since service. Find out information [from] other service members that can help you out more."

Arnette was arrested on DUI charges. It was his third offense.

There are about 50,000 veterans living in Pasco County, said Veterans Service Officer Brian Arnette.

The University of South Florida is pitching in with its veteran therapy program. They'll treat inmates who qualify for the program at no cost. Inmates who are veterans can qualify for the jail's program based on how they're classified in the system. "If we had a serial killer, obviously he wouldn't be in here," Revell said.



Suppose you discovered that all the high-tech promises of the 20th century that seem to elude mankind — fusion power, genetic enhancements, artificial intelligence, cures for disease, extended human life — are not beyond our grasp but instead are in the hands of an elite few?

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By JENNIFER Hlad
Stars and Stripes

SAN DIEGO — Good news, Marines and fans of Marine biceps (ahem): Rolled sleeves are coming back.

Commandant Gen. James Amos and Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Micheal Barrett announced Tuesday via Facebook that the Corps is bringing back rolled sleeves.

"I can't tell you how many times we have been asked the persistent question, 'Commandant, are we ever going to return to SLEEVES UP?'" the Facebook announcement states. "I've thought a lot about this over the past 2.5 years; I realize that it's important to you. Sleeves up clearly and visually sets us apart."

Amos and Barrett sent the message via email to all Marine sergeants and corporals, noting that they had heard the comments about rolled sleeves as they've traveled around the world talking about recent efforts to "reawaken the soul of [the] Corps" with a renewed focus on discipline, adherence to standards, engaged and concerned leadership and faithful obedience to order.

Before October 2011, Marines wore their sleeves rolled up — in a very particular way, of course — in the spring and summer months when wearing their desert camouflage utilities in noncombat areas, and kept their



ANDREW D. JOHNSTON/Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps

With sleeves rolled, Lt. Col. Joseph C. Murray and Lt. Col. Patrick W. McCuen salute their Marines as they march by at the end of a change-of-command ceremony in July 2011 at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. Commandant Gen. James Amos and Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Micheal Barrett announced Tuesday that the Corps is bringing back rolled sleeves, which had been prohibited since October 2011.

sleeves rolled down in the winter while wearing the woodland camouflage uniform.

The brief Marine administrative message canceling the 2011 change and reverting to previous policy was posted Wednesday morning.

Many were unhappy when Amos announced that Marines would keep their sleeves rolled

down year round, particularly those who work in warm climates. And, as noted in Amos' message, they made their opinions known.

More than 28,000 people had "liked" the Facebook post by Wednesday morning, and dozens had commented in disbelief, wondering if the message had been some kind of hoax. It is not.

The change will go into effect

March 9, when Marines make the seasonal switch to the tan desert camouflage.

Now, Marines are just wondering when they will be able to go

back to spit-shining their boots, wearing "silksies" for PT and using knife hands.

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Marine Corps Times: Emails show intent behind moving newspapers

Stars and Stripes

Marine Corps officials who tried to ban the Marine Corps Times from base newsstands or move it to less visible areas in stores did so because of the paper's reporting on the commandant, emails obtained by that paper suggest.

The Times had been conducting an ongoing investigation into allegations that Marine commandant Gen. James Amos abused his authority by ordering punishment for Marines who urinated on Taliban corpses in 2012.

In an email written May 15 and published Sunday in the Marine Corps Times, Chris Hughes, a deputy director of Marine Corps public affairs, wrote that "every few years" the Marines "have a falling out with Marine Corps Times that warrants consider-

ation of some level of 'ban' from our facilities."

"We believe that we may be close to such an impasse, and we want to present the Commandant with options," Hughes wrote to senior executive service employees. "We believe it becomes a 'good order and discipline' issue if [Amos] believes he is being misrepresented by them. On such grounds, could he prohibit their sale in our [Marine Corps Community Services] facilities? Or, could he place them somewhere less prominent?"

Robert Hogue, the commandant's top civilian attorney, emailed Hughes three hours later: "I recommend we try to talk the boss off the ledge here," he wrote. "That said, to respond to your specific question, there are authorities we can use to

move the MCT from a position of prominence in our facilities."

Earlier this month, the Marine Corps Times briefly lost its spot near the checkout lines at base stores. At the time, the Marine Corps said the move was simply meant to "professionalize" the front of exchange stores, and that the MCT's suspicions of retribution had been "a clear misunderstanding of intent."

Marine Corps Times authenticated the internal discussion from May 15, 2013, that contradicts official statements offered recently in response to the service's decision in December to relocate the newspaper away from checkout lines at Marine Corps Exchange stores worldwide, the Times reported.

The Marine Corps says the matter is under review.

Sinclair seeks dismissal of sex assault charges

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — A U.S. Army general facing court-martial on sexual assault charges is again seeking to have the case against him dismissed.

Lawyers for Brig. Gen. Jeffrey A. Sinclair filed a motion made

public Tuesday asking military judge Col. James Pohl to throw out the case. Sinclair's lawyers argued that testimony from the primary witness against him is unreliable and that top Pentagon brass improperly decided on prosecutorial decisions.

Pohl has denied at least two past motions to dismiss from the

defense. Sinclair's court-martial is set to begin March 4 at Fort Bragg.

Sinclair, 51, has pleaded not guilty to eight criminal counts, including forcible sodomy, indecent acts and conduct unbecoming an officer. The married father of two faces life in prison if convicted.

From The Associated Press

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NATION

Toddler obesity statistics decline

By Mike Stobbe
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Toddler obesity shrank sharply in the past decade, a new study suggests. While promising, it's not proof that the nation has turned a corner in the battle against childhood obesity, some experts say.

The finding comes from a government study considered a gold-standard gauge of trends in the public's health. The researchers found that obesity among children ages 2 to 5 decreased — to 8 percent, from 14 percent a decade ago. That would represent a 43 percent drop.

But the only decline was seen in preschoolers, not in older children. And some experts note that even the improvement in toddlers wasn't a steady decline, and say it's hard to know yet whether preschool weight figures are permanently curving down or merely slowing around.

It is enough of a decline to be optimistic, said Cynthia Ogden, one of the study's authors.

"There's a glimmer of hope," said Ogden, an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The report was published online Tuesday in the Journal of the



Oumou Balde, 4, left, and teacher Jacqueline Sanchez, right, play with pretend food in a pre-kindergarten class at the Sheltering Arms Learning Center in New York in a program to educate children about nutrition.

American Medical Association.

Health officials have long been hoping for more substantial evidence that they've turned a corner in the fight against childhood obesity.

Obesity is seen as one of the nation's leading public health problems — health officials call it a longstanding epidemic. A third of U.S. children and teens and more than two-thirds of adults are obese or overweight.

Officials are particularly worried about the problem in young children. Preschoolers who are overweight or obese are five times more likely than other children to be heavy as adults, which means greater risks of high cholesterol, high blood sugar, asthma and even

43

The percentage by which obesity among children ages 2 to 5 decreased in the past decade — from 14 to 8 percent — according to a government survey.

mental health problems.

After decades on the rise, childhood obesity rates recently have been flat. But a few places — including New York City and Mississippi — reported improvements in the last couple of years. Seattle joined that list last week, with a report of recently declining obesity in older school children in low-income school districts.

More broadly, health officials last year reported at least slight

drops in obesity for low-income preschoolers in 18 states. But they mainly were children enrolled in the federal Women, Infants and Children program, which provides food vouchers and other services. Experts attributed the improvement to WIC policy changes in 2009 that eliminated juice from infant food packages, provided less saturated fat, and made it easier to buy fruits and vegetables.

The new study is a national survey of about 9,100 people — including nearly 600 infants and toddlers — in 2011-2012, in which participants were not only interviewed but weighed and measured. The results were compared to four similar surveys that stretched back to 2003.

Obama: Health insurance enrollment reaches 4 million

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama said Tuesday that about 4 million people have signed up for health insurance through U.S. or state marketplaces set up under his health care law. But with a key deadline approaching fast, he urged some of his most steadfast backers to help sign up, an millions more.

"We've only got a few weeks left, March 31st, that's the last call," Obama said, explaining that anyone not signed up by that date will have to wait until open enrollment begins anew in the fall. In the meantime, they risk being fined for not having coverage.

Signing up enough people, particularly those who are young and healthy, is critical for the insurance pool at the heart of the law to function properly by keeping premiums low for everyone.

The White House has set an unofficial goal of 7 million enrollees by the end of March.

Nearly 3.5 million people, or less than half the total, had enrolled through the end of January.

Enrollment was slowed at the start of the sign-up period last October by numerous glitches in the health care website the administration created to help people find coverage. Some states running their own websites encountered problems, too.

Obama blamed the depressed enrollment on the bungled website and on an "implacable opposition" by Republicans that he said has spent hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars to oppose the signature domestic policy accomplishment of his presidency.

The president promised a "big push these last few weeks" to sign people up. Already, he and first lady Michelle Obama have talked up the health care law in interviews with radio and TV stations that reach largely black and Latino audiences. Vice President Joe Biden appeared Tuesday on "The View" TV talk show to encourage its largely female viewership to help get people to buy coverage.

"If they want health insurance now, they need to sign up now," Obama said.



Yuvania Maldonado, an in-person counselor for the president's new health care law, speaks with taxi driver Mohammad Chaudhri at a city office where Chicago taxi drivers go to renew their license on Feb. 3.

Phishing scam targets government benefits site

By Eric Yoder
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Someone recently went on a phishing expedition to see whether federal employees would bite on a phony Thrift Savings Plan website, and the TSP — suspecting another federal agency — wants to know who dangled the bait.

The TSP, a 401(k)-style program available to federal civilian employees and military personnel, said Monday that it is investigating an email that made the rounds of federal employees last week directing them to a site with a variant spelling of the TSP's official site, tsp.gov.

The TSP suspects that the email started with an agency testing its workers' security awareness, because similar incidents have happened at least twice before, most recently in 2009, spokeswoman Kim Weaver said.

The message spread among a number of agencies, triggering inquiries to the TSP about the phony site.

The site, apparently created by the email's original sender, has been taken down since the phishing message went out, and there is no indication that anyone's investment account was compromised, Weaver said.

The TSP posted a notice on its site Monday warning account holders that sites other than its own "may steal your login credentials when you enter them." Last year, the savings program issued a similar warning about third-party mobile device applications.

But the TSP is not certain that another agency launched the email. "What we're trying to do is backtrack to where it started," Weaver said.

If another agency is identified as the source, "we will send a really stern letter" and work within the government's financial and security communities to dissuade other agencies from doing the same.

"Our brand and people's trust is paramount," Weaver said.

"We can't afford to have people misuse our brand in that way. Security awareness training is great stuff, but leave us out of it."

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OPINION

Ariz. Catholic group backing bigotry

By HAROLD MEYERSON

A patriotism can be the last refuge of scoundrels, so religion can be the last refuge of bigots.

The most recent attempts to besmirch religion have come from Arizona's Republican state legislators, who last week, on a near-party-line vote, passed a bill allowing businesses to discriminate against same-sex couples on religious grounds. The bill is on the desk of Republican Gov. Jan Brewer; she has until week's end to sign or veto it.

Arizona's Republican U.S. senators, John McCain and Jeff Flake, recognize that a bill permitting restaurants, hotels and other business to deny service to gays and lesbians on religious grounds might (and should) strike many Americans as an affront to our foundational creed "that all men are created equal." They have called on Brewer to reject the bill. So has the state's Chamber of Commerce, which fears that some businesses would decide not to set up shop in Arizona if they knew their homosexual employees could be subjected to that kind of discrimination. A host of other officials have called for a veto, including three Republican legislators who voted for the bill but have had second thoughts.

Recently in Kansas, Republican legislators in the lower house passed a kindred bill only to have it die in the state Senate when GOP legislative leaders realized that it went too far. But the fact that two absurd proposals swept through two states' legislative bodies with nearly unanimous Republican support signals a kind of panic within the GOP base at the recent advances in gay and lesbian equality, in particular the right to marry. It signals that Republicans, and some religious leaders, are willing to in-

That two absurd proposals swept through two states' legislative bodies signals a kind of panic within the GOP base at recent advances in gay and lesbian equality.

voke religion as a cloak for their bigotry.

That wouldn't be the first time, of course, that religion has served as a shield for those who would deny their fellow Americans the most rudimentary equal rights. During the civil rights movement in the 1950s and '60s, a number of Southern fundamentalist ministers preached that racial segregation was God's design. In a 1960 Easter Sunday radio sermon, the Rev. Bob Jones, founder of South Carolina's eponymous Christian university, told his listeners, "If you are against segregation and against racial separation, then you are against God Almighty." Labeling as "Satanic" those who were working to abolish Jim Crow laws, Jones preached that it was God who "drew the boundary lines between races."

Mainstream Southern denominations, by contrast, did support desegregation, and the Rev. Billy Graham, crucially, declined to oppose the 1964 Civil Rights Act while it was pending in Congress. But the religious case for discrimination was alive and well in Southern fundamentalist circles — as it is alive and well, apparently, in some parts of the Republican Party today.

And not just in the Republican Party. The Arizona Catholic Conference is among those urging Brewer to sign the bill. Just to be clear: No one is advocating that priests, the Catholic Church or other religious institutions be compelled to preside over same-sex marriages. The issue is whether businesses can refuse service to gays and

lesbians based on the businesses' religious beliefs, though you probably have to believe that corporations are people in order that businesses can have religious beliefs.

That the Catholic Church in Arizona is opposed to gay marriage is hardly news. But its willingness to go so far as to create a right for private businesses to discriminate based on sexual orientation is appalling. It harks back more to the spirit of Bob Jones than to that of the brave priests and nuns who went to the South in the '50s and '60s to demonstrate for civil rights — or, for that matter, to the spirit of Pope Francis. Indeed, the church's opposition seems to reflect the pre-Enlightenment social conservatism that Francis' predecessors sought to impose on the church through their hierarchical appointments. If the church's position on the Arizona bill is any indication, those appointments continue to pose a huge problem for the Catholic Church in America — for its future among the young and for its moral stature.

On the other hand, the president of Uganda signed into law Monday a statute that would sentence to life in prison people convicted of "aggravated homosexuality" that is, people convicted more than once for having had gay sex). If Arizona's Republicans and Catholic bishops don't like it here, why don't they move to Uganda?

Harold Meyerson is editor-at-large of The American Prospect. This column first appeared in The Washington Post.

Rising Pacific tensions keep US on China watch

By DAVID IGNATIUS

A SHANGHAI Chinese military expert is explaining to a conference here what he sees as the benign inevitability of Beijing's rising power in the Pacific. "You should trust China," he says cheerily. "In 10 years, we will be much stronger, and you will feel safer."

This Chinese prediction did not appear to reassure most of the several dozen European and American experts gathered for discussions last weekend. Instead, there was a consensus, even among most of the Chinese participants, that Beijing's growing military power has worried its neighbors and led to friction with Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam over disputed islands and maritime rights.

"You think we are a bully," conceded the Chinese military expert. "We think we are a victim." But nobody in the room disagreed about the reality that tensions in the Pacific are rising — and that China and its neighbors cannot seem to find a way out. Which leaves the United States awkwardly in between, trying to support traditional allies such as Japan, without encouraging them to take reckless moves.

It is a sign of the times that delegates here talked openly about the danger of war in the Pacific. That's a big change from the tone of similar gatherings just a few years ago, when Chinese officials often tried to reassure foreign experts that a rising China wasn't on a collision course with the U.S. or regional powers. Now, in the East and South China seas, the collision seems all too possible.

Just two weeks ago, U.S. Navy Capt. James Fanell warned at a conference in

San Diego that China had been training for a "short, sharp war" to assert primacy over islands claimed by Japan as the Senkaku and by China as the Diaoyu. "I do not know how Chinese intentions could be more transparent," he said, noting that Beijing's talk of "protection of maritime rights" was actually "a Chinese euphemism for the coerced seizure of coastal rights of China's neighbors."

This is the Asian real-world backdrop for U.S. debates over military spending. Defense Secretary Hagel said in Washington on Monday that the Pentagon "will continue to shift its operational focus and forces to the Asia-Pacific." But will allies such as Japan and the Philippines be bolstered by such talk at a time when the U.S. is sharply cutting troops and warplanes — and will potential adversaries such as China be deterred?

The changing political-military map in Asia formed the context for last weekend's meeting of the Stockholm China Forum, an annual event sponsored by the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (of which I'm a trustee). The not-for-attribution discussions were surprisingly frank, on all sides. But they dispelled, at least for me, the hope that China will continue deferring to a powerful U.S. Instead, we're clearly entering a period of greater Chinese assertiveness, especially in maritime issues.

The Shanghai discussions also highlighted what's ahead for the United States in what strategists see as its role as "offshore balancer" of Chinese power. America is committed by treaty to defend Japanese administrative control in the Senkaku

Islands; the U.S. military has plans to defeat any Chinese "short, sharp war" there. But the U.S. doesn't want to get dragged into war over a few crags of rock, either, so Washington is also urging caution to Tokyo.

The Senkaku situation is tense because Chinese coast guard vessels and planes shadow the islands every day. This harassment has settled into a pattern whose very predictability is one of the few stable elements in the dispute. But given that no diplomatic resolution is in sight, Beijing and Tokyo need channels for crisis communication — lest Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's analogy last month to the run-up to World War I prove true.

In the South China Sea, China's ambitions involve what it calls the "nine-dash line," which vaguely asserts Chinese maritime claims almost to the coasts of Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines. This line has no legal foundation, in America's view, and even the Chinese don't define just what the line represents. The Philippine government has filed an international arbitration claim challenging the nine-dash demarcation, so perhaps legal limits will be placed on China's maritime expansion.

When Chinese officials meet at international conferences such as the one in Shanghai, they often talk about "win-win cooperation." It's a soothing concept, and it has become the elevator music of international meetings. But looking at the Pacific region, it's hard to see any such spirit of compromise at work.

David Ignatius is a member of Washington Post Writers Group.

OPINION

Why did warhead funding stay status quo?

By DOYLE McMANUS
Los Angeles Times

The headlines on the Pentagon budget unveiled by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel this week were all about austerity: the smallest U.S. Army since 1940; fewer aircraft, ships and armored vehicles; even some modest belt-tightening on future military pay and benefits.

But one category of military spending largely escaped the budget ax: nuclear weapons.

The United States has about 1,600 long-range nuclear weapons on active duty — more than any other country, including Vladimir Putin's Russia. Under the 2010 New START treaty, the United States and Russia agreed to reduce their arsenals to no more than 1,550 warheads apiece by 2018. The Russians are already below the treaty ceiling after taking missiles out of service as part of a modernization program. But the U.S. doesn't appear to be in any hurry.

Maintaining and modernizing our giant arsenal, which, happily, seems increasingly unlikely to ever be used, is expensive. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that U.S. nuclear forces will cost \$355 billion over the next 10 years. About \$89 billion of that will go to replacing aging missiles, submarines and bombers, and those costs will grow much larger after 2023, the CBO warned in a recent report.

Worst of all, much of that spending is unnecessary. Almost every expert on nuclear weapons agrees that the United States has a far larger nuclear force than it needs to deter attacks.

Last year, for example, when President Barack Obama proposed reducing U.S. and Russian nuclear forces by about one-third to 1,100 warheads each, the Joint Chiefs

of Staff embraced the idea. A year earlier, an independent panel convened by Global Zero, a disarmament group, concluded that 450 deployed warheads would be enough; one of its members was a retired senator named Chuck Hagel.

But since then, Hagel has been virtually mute about reducing nuclear arms. "If there was ever a time to start resetting this institution and restructuring ... it's now," he said Tuesday as he pitched his budget to a roomful of defense experts. But when I asked him whether he still harbored the goal of shrinking the nuclear force, he ducked the question, saying his only goal was to leave the military stronger than he found it.

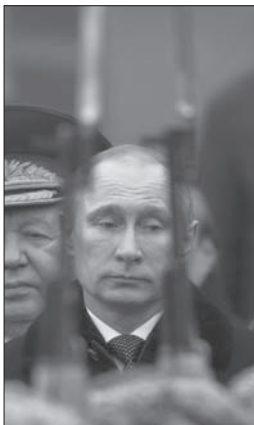
The reason officials don't like to talk about reducing nuclear arsenals is simple, and it applies in both Washington and Moscow: The weapons may have a diminishing role, but they are protected by political sponsors — sometimes based on honest disagreements over strategy, sometimes because of the jobs they provide.

When Hagel came before the Senate for confirmation last year, Republicans interrogated him about his signature on the Global Zero report, he retreated, saying the proposal was merely "illustrative" and that any nuclear reductions would need to be negotiated with Russia first.

Among his critics were senators from states where nuclear missiles are based: Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota.

It would be easier to argue for more nuclear ops if Russia were eager to join in the reductions, but Putin rebuffed Obama's most recent proposal for another round of disarmament.

"The Russians seem to have glommed onto the idea that their status as a great power depends on their nuclear weapons," said Steven Pifer, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine who is now at the Brookings



ALEXANDER ZEMLIANCHENKO/AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow on Sunday. Putin rebuffed President Barack Obama's most recent proposal for another round of nuclear disarmament.

Institution in Washington. "It's also about jobs. There are a lot of one-factory towns in Russia producing military hardware, and they're part of Putin's political base."

Even so, Pifer notes, there are unilateral steps the administration could take to

reduce the size and cost of the U.S. arsenal. For starters, some missile warheads could be taken off active duty, to match the Russians' lower number and meet the START treaty ceiling now. "It's a reversible step," Pifer noted. "It seems to me to be a no-brainer."

The costliest items, though, aren't the nuclear warheads but the vehicles that carry them: missiles, submarines and bombers. Over the next 20 years, the Pentagon plans to spend billions to modernize all three legs of that nuclear triad.

"A new submarine, a new penetrating bomber, a new ICBM — that pretty much breaks the bank," Pifer said.

Unless, that is, we decide to live with fewer vehicles.

Take nuclear submarines. Sometime after 2020, the Pentagon plans to replace all 12 of its subs that carry nuclear weapons at a cost that will probably exceed \$6 billion a boat. But Pifer and others suggest we would be just as safe with eight or nine nuclear missile submarines.

Similar savings are available in the planned replacements for today's B-2 and B-52 bombers and the Minuteman III missiles in the silos of the High Plains.

It might even be possible to close one of the country's three nuclear missile bases, although closing any military base is politically thorny.

So why is Hagel's budget, for all its cost-cutting, silent on those issues?

"It's an argument we can't need to have this year," one Pentagon official told me. The cost of building those new subs, bombers and missiles won't balloon until 2020 or so. Until then, it's a problem both sides can ignore.

And what president wouldn't choose to avoid a nuclear war — even a rhetorical one with Congress — if he could?

Doyle McManus is a Los Angeles Times columnist.

Uniform military health care could help patients, budget

By WALTER PINCUS
The Washington Post

A new series of critical reports highlights the need to speed up unification of the military services' separate approaches to health care, which is one of the fastest-growing budget items but still lacks common standards for dealing with some medical issues.

The Military Health System, which provides care to more than 9.7 million active, retired and service-family beneficiaries worldwide, cost \$51.4 billion in fiscal 2012, or 9.7 percent of Pentagon spending. That was up from \$19 billion in fiscal 2001, or 6 percent of spending.

The Congressional Budget Office has projected that health spending could reach \$65 billion in fiscal 2017 and \$92 billion by 2030.

Forget all that talk of jointness that grew out of the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act 28 years ago. There are still separate surgeons general for the Army, Navy and Air Force — at the three-star rank — each responsible for overseeing his or her own medical forces and health care systems.

It was nine years ago when the Government Accountability Office first suggested that the Pentagon could "achieve economies of scale and improve delivery [of medical care] by combining, realigning or otherwise changing selected support functions." In 2011, the GAO in a report on reducing duplication in government programs focused on the Defense Department's health care system not having a

"central command authority or single entity accountable for minimizing costs and achieving efficiencies."

The Pentagon took a step in 2012 to change the system, which Congress codified in the fiscal 2013 Defense Authorization Act. Reform began with the Oct. 1, 2013, establishment of the Defense Health Agency (DHA), headed by the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. The new structure was designed to better integrate common management functions such as information technology, medical research, facility planning, medical logistics, contracting and budget management.

It is underway, but with the military being the military, jointness doesn't happen quickly. A Military Health Service Governors' Transition Organization had to be created in March 2013 with its own transition bureaucracy — an "action group, an advisory council, along with a review board, each with specific roles and responsibilities," according to the GAO. The organization is overseeing the process through October 2015, when the DHA is expected to be fully operational.

What savings are possible? Jointly implementing just the facility planning — operating current medical facilities (there are about 1,000) and constructing new ones — through shared services could potentially save \$1.1 billion over six years, the Pentagon told Congress in June.

The most recent illustration of the lack of coordination came Friday, when the Defense Department's inspector general reported that the military services have varied policies even when dealing with Wounded Warriors programs, which deal

with service personnel injured since Sept. 11.

The IG report focuses on the services' separate standards for monitoring medications for Wounded Warriors programs and particularly controlled substances, but it points out there are even service differences in what's needed for admission into their programs.

The Army, for example, requires the soldier to have had a medical condition "that demanded at least six months of complex medical management," while the Marine Corps standard was that the individual had "to have medical conditions that demanded treatment for more than 90 days."

The Air Force requires an injury or illness that is combat- or hostilities-related, requiring an unspecified amount of long-term care and a medical evaluation board or physical evaluation board to determine fitness for duty. The Navy has a similar standard.

When it comes to drugs, the IG reported that the Army's threshold for monitoring an individual was someone taking "four medications when one is a controlled substance," while the Navy hospital at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina was "five controlled substances." The Camp Lejeune policy also had a system for identifying "doctor shopping" — an individual going to multiple doctors with the same prescription to get more drugs — while the Army has none.

The IG noted that the differences are important when an Army wounded warrior requires special care at a Navy facility "where the same level of medication oversight" does not exist.

The thrust of the IG report is that the Defense Department has "not issued overarching policy guidance to address the risks involved in managing wounded warriors' medical medications," but a consistent policy for that high-risk patient population will "decrease the risk of adverse drug events and poor patient outcomes."

On Feb. 20, the Institute of Medicine in a report questioned the various Defense Department programs dealing with psychological issues of servicemembers and their families.

While the Defense Department-sponsored study was based on reviewing earlier studies, its experts pointed out that many programs were "not consistently based on evidence" and "are evaluated infrequently or inadequately." The study also points to the multiplicity of programs, noting, for example, that "each military service and the Office of the Secretary of Defense administer dozens of family-focused prevention programs," but "a more coordinated, comprehensive and systematic approach is needed."

On Wednesday, the House Armed Services subcommittee on military personnel is scheduled to look into how the Defense Health Agency effort at jointness is moving ahead. Its director, Lt. Gen. Douglas Robb, and Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, will appear.

Joining them will be the GAO's Brenda Farrell, whose agency has been critical of how the reforms are working.

Walter Pincus reports on intelligence, defense and foreign policy for The Washington Post and writes the Fine Print column.

NATION

Infected rat blamed for boy's death in lawsuit

By JULIE WATSON
The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The death of a 10-year-old San Diego boy from a bacterial infection he reportedly got from his pet rat prompted his family to sue retailer Petco, saying they want to raise awareness among parents.

Attorney John Gomez told The Associated Press on Tuesday that his firm filed the lawsuit Monday in San Diego County seeking an unspecified amount for the suffering endured by the Pankey family, whose son, Aidan, died June 12, 2013, hours after he was rushed to the hospital with severe stomach pains.

The San Diego County medical examiner's office ruled that the cause of death was streptobacillus moniliformis infection, commonly known as rat-bite fever, after exposure to an infected rat.

Gomez said the Pankey family was not giving interviews, but they are devastated by the death.

"It's a means to ensure this doesn't happen again," Gomez said of the lawsuit. "Apparently there was some breakdown in procedures. They want tighter controls."

According to the lawsuit, the rat appeared safe. But the lawsuit says Petco should have known about the rodent's health and did not adequately test for the disease. It also says that negligence led to the boy's death, which has caused his parents, Andrew Pankey and Vanessa Sauer, emotional and economic hardship, and that the retailer did not post adequate warnings about the potential risks, especially for children.

Petco Animal Supplies Inc. said it is "in the process of investigating these claims and will respond



COURTESY OF THE PANKEY FAMILY/AP

Aidan Pankey carries one of his pet rats on his shoulder as he gets ready for a bike ride. His family claims he died in July 2013 from rat-bite fever contracted from a male rat purchased from Petco.

appropriately when we have more information."

"We are deeply saddened by the Pankey family's tragic loss," Petco said in a statement. "The health and safety of people and pets is always a top priority, and we take the family's concerns very seriously."

The boy's grandmother purchased the male rat, which Aidan named Alex, because her only grandson wanted a mate for his female rat, Gomez said. The boy took the rat home May 27, 2013, and woke up the night of June 11 in severe pain with a fever. He was pale, lethargic and could barely walk, according to the lawsuit. He died at 1:09 a.m. the next day.

"He was a bright, energetic, friendly, happy kid who actually had a prior rat, who was a female, and he had this idea in his young head of having his female rat get married," Gomez said.

The lawsuit was not filed until now because attorneys were awaiting the lab results from the federal Centers for Disease Control, which tested the rat to confirm it was infected, Gomez said. The agency could not immediately confirm the results Tuesday.

According to the CDC, people can contract rat-bite fever from bites or scratches from infected rodents, such as rats, mice and gerbils, or even just by handling an animal with the disease.

Calif. town cops tied to car thefts

By CHANNING JOSEPH
AND MARTHA MENDOZA
The Associated Press

KING CITY, Calif. — One-third of a central California town's police force was taken off duty after several officers were arrested in a scheme to force themselves the impounded cars of some poor Hispanic residents, authorities said.

In the scheme, vehicles were impounded and towed, and when the car owners couldn't pay the fees, the vehicles were sold or given away for free to some officers, Monterey County District Attorney Dean Flippo said Tuesday.

Four King City officers — including the recently retired police chief and the acting chief — have been arrested in the scheme, and two others were also arrested Tuesday on unrelated charges, Flippo said. The officers have been placed on paid administrative leave, KSBW-TV reported.

"There has been a significant breakdown in the internal leadership of the King City Police Department," Flippo said. "It also appears to me that some officers have dishonored their badge."

The six officers account for more than a third of the 17-member force in the agricultural town of 13,000 people about 150 miles southeast of San Francisco.

Early Tuesday morning, teams from the Monterey County sheriff's office, the FBI, the Salinas Police Department and the district attorney's bureau of investigation arrested the officers after a months-long investigation.

It began as a response to complaints by residents of corruption and criminal acts within the department dating back at least 3½ years, Flippo said.

The probe revealed that the scheme focused on poor Hispanic

residents — including many who don't speak English. More than 200 vehicles had been impounded, Flippo said, and 87 percent had been taken in by the same towing company.

In some cases, authorities said, officers simply kept the cars for their own use.

The four officers tied to the alleged car theft scheme have each been charged with bribery, accepting a bribe or embezzlement. They are Sgt. Bobby Javier Carrillo, Acting Chief Bruce Edward Miller, former Chief Dominic David Baldviev and Mario Alonso Mottu Sr.

Brian Albert Miller, the operator of the towing company who is also the brother of the acting chief, has also been arrested in the case.

The other two officers arrested Tuesday are facing charges unrelated to the scheme. Officer Jaime Andrade was accused of possession of an assault weapon and illegal storage of a firearm, and Officer Mark Allen Baker was arrested on suspicion of criminal threats.

Investigators said Carrillo was the car scheme's ring leader and that for every 10 to 15 vehicles he impounded, he would receive one free vehicle to keep or sell.

Authorities said Carrillo gave one of those vehicles to Bruce Miller, who was then a police captain and has been charged with accepting a bribe, the Salinas California reported.

Authorities also say Baldviev gave Mottu a 2001 Ford Crown Victoria patrol car belonging to King City or the King City Police Explorers, the newspaper said.

All seven of those arrested were bailed out of jail within hours, KSBW reported.

Confused Japanese tourists trigger police pursuit

By BRADY MCCOMB
The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — The first night in the United States for a family of Japanese tourists ended with the parents being pulled from their rental car at gunpoint with their young son watching after their confusion about American traffic laws set off a high-speed pursuit in southern Utah.

The pursuit began at 1 a.m. Saturday on Interstate 15 near the Utah-Arizona border when the couple's car was spotted going just 37 mph and swerving between lanes, said Lt. Brad Horne, Utah Highway Patrol's DUI unit commander.

More than a dozen patrolmen were working the area in a special DUI operation, and Horne said he figured the car was being driven by a drunken driver. Horne turned on his lights and sirens to pull the car over.

Instead of pulling over, the driver sped up to 75 mph and began driving erratically, he said. Her speeds fluctuated between 40 and 75 mph as she weaved across lanes and into the shoulder.

Soon, there were three patrol cars in pursuit with other officers closing highway off-ramps and setting tire spikes miles ahead, Horne said.

"It was literally red and blue lights in every direction," Horne said.

The couple's car skidded to a stop about 7 miles north of where the pursuit began after three of the tires deflated after hitting the spikes.

A patrolman bellowed commands from a loudspeaker in his patrol car, telling the couple to exit and walk backward. Both directions of 1-15 were closed as officers prepared to encounter hardened criminals.

Instead, a Japanese woman in her early 40s emerged.

"She would walk forward, backward, spin around — obviously she had no clue what we wanted her to do," Horne said.

Still bracing for the worst, officers approached the car with guns drawn and pulled the woman and a man from the car. That's when they saw the couple's 7-year-old son in the backseat and realized the family didn't speak English.

The boy was crying, and the parents appeared nervous and confused, Horne said.

"I think they were terrified," he said.

Realizing they were dealing with language and cultural barriers, and not a drunken driver or fugitive, officers changed their strategy, Horne said. One officer consoled the boy and reunited him with his parents as others worked to get a Japanese-speaking officer on the phone.

They found one in northern Utah who spoke to the couple and learned they had arrived from Japan on Friday morning and rented a car to drive from California to Bryce Canyon in southern Utah.

The woman said she had no idea what she was supposed to do when the patrolman put on his lights and siren, so she sped up to get out of the way. She kept apologizing for crashing the car, not realizing they ran over tire spikes, Horne said. Patrolmen took the family to a motel and wished them safe travels.

Nobody was hurt and no cars damaged other than the flat tires, he said. Authorities don't plan to pursue charges.

Store mistake leads to \$10M jackpot win

DEPEW, N.Y. — A convenience store clerk's mistake has paid off in a big way for a western New York man.

Terry Kajfazz, 53, of Lancaster won a \$10 million jackpot from a \$20 scratch-off ticket he purchased last month at a suburban Buffalo store.

He said he bought seven scratch-off tickets but the clerk nearly handed him an eighth one costing \$20. Kajfazz caught the mistake and handed it back.

After winning a total of \$25 from the tickets, he went back inside the store and used the winnings to buy the same \$20 scratch-off ticket the clerk had almost given to him by mistake.

That Win for Life Spectacular ticket wound up being a winner with a guaranteed minimum jackpot of \$10 million. Kajfazz has already quit his printing job.

From The Associated Press

WORLD

'El Chapo' unlikely to be leaving Mexico soon

The Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán appears set to remain in Mexico's highest-security prison for the foreseeable future, as the government puts off U.S. extradition in a move that could bolster President Enrique Peña Nieto's nationalist credentials but also shine a spotlight on the country's woeful judicial system.

Experts say Peña Nieto's administration and those of his predecessors have proven unable to match headline-grabbing arrests like Guzmán's with complex, long-term investigations and prosecutions of deep-rooted criminal networks. Cases have stalled and cartels have continued to operate. Last year, one of Guzmán's closest allies walked out of the prison where the U.S. said he was running drugs from behind bars.

The Mexican government says there is no way Guzmán will re-

peat the 2001 escape that let him roam western Mexico for 13 years as he moved billions of dollars of cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin around the world. Authorities here say they want to be the first to interrogate Guzmán, and use the information to dismantle his Sinaloa cartel, a multibillion-dollar enterprise that dominates drug trafficking in much of Mexico and stretches into 54 countries.

Two federal judges ruled Tuesday that Guzmán will have to stand trial on separate drug-trafficking and organized-crime charges in Mexico. Peña Nieto's administration said the man widely considered the world's most-powerful drug lord until his capture Saturday will face at least six other pending criminal cases before it even considers extraditing him to the U.S.

Experts on both sides of the border warned that keeping Guzmán

in Mexican hands could squander the opportunity to exploit his unparalleled knowledge of the country's biggest drug cartel. U.S. prosecutors have proven far more capable of offering captured drug lords the incentives to cooperate with law enforcement, experts said.

U.S. officials routinely use family members as tools to pressure defendants into giving up information, granting visas to relatives of cooperative prisoners while threatening to leave loved ones penniless by freezing assets of drug lords who refuse to play ball.

Mexican authorities arrested Guzmán, 56, along with his 20-something wife and twin toddlers, but let her go because there were no charges pending against her. Observers called it a staggering missed opportunity that wouldn't have occurred in the U.S.



GPR (MEXICO'S ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE)/AP

Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán opens his mouth for a DNA test to confirm his identity, after his detention in Mexico City on Saturday.

Russian exercises set amid Ukraine tensions

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday ordered massive exercises involving most military units in western Russia amid tensions in Ukraine.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said in a televised statement made at a meeting of top military brass in Moscow that the exercise is intended to "checks the troops' readiness for action in crisis situations that threaten the nation's military security."

In remarks carried by Russian news agencies, Shoigu said that the maneuvers involve some 150,000 troops, 880 tanks, 90 aircraft and 80 navy ships.

He said the exercise is unrelated to the developments in Ukraine, where tensions remain high following the toppling of Russia-backed President Viktor Yanukovich.

But Shoigu added that the exercise will be held near Russian borders, including the border with Ukraine. He also said, according to Russian news reports, that his ministry will take steps

to strengthen security of the facilities of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, without elaborating.

The maneuvers follow a series of war games Russia has held recently.

In July, a military exercise in Siberia and the far eastern region involved 160,000 troops and about 5,000 tanks and other armored vehicles along with the air force and the navy.

Shoigu said the maneuvers will start Friday and will last four days. The exercise will involve ships of the Baltic and the Northern Fleets and the air force.

Russia has questioned the legitimacy of the new Ukrainian authorities and accused them of failing to control radicals who threaten the Russia-speaking population in Ukraine's east and south.

A senior Russian lawmaker on Tuesday told pro-Russian activists in Crimea that Moscow will protect them if their lives are in danger.



L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO/AP

Pope greets mini-pope

Daniele De Sanctis, 19 months, dressed up as a pope, is handed to Pope Francis during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Wednesday. Francis kissed the child as the new must-have Mardi Gras, or Carnival, costume made its debut. During Carnival in Italy, children often go to school and spend their weekends dressed up in costumes. Daniele's mother, Paola Ciabattini, said she dressed her son as a pope in a demonstration of affection toward Pope Francis.

Report: Syrian army kills 175 rebels in attack near Damascus

The Associated Press

BEIRUT — Syrian army troops killed 175 rebels in an ambush Wednesday south of Damascus, state media reported, a major attack targeting mostly al-Qaida-linked fighters as part of a government effort to secure the capital.

The dawn attack by President Bashar Assad's forces in the opposition-held area of eastern Ghouta likely will push rebel groups

against his rule further away from Damascus, his seat of power. The capital's suburbs have been in opposition strongholds since March 2011, when the revolt against the ruling family began.

If confirmed, it would be one of the deadliest attacks by government forces against rebels in the area.

Syrian state news agency SANA quoted a field commander in the eastern Ghouta area saying most of rebels killed in the assault near

Oteibah lake southeast of Damascus belonged to the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front rebel group. The report said several of those killed were foreign fighters who came to Syria from Saudi Arabia, Chechnya and Qatar to fight.

SANA said the army's operation dealt "a smashing blow to terrorists," a term Syrian state media uses for rebels.

SANA posted several photographs on its website showing dozens of bodies of men lying in a dirt

track of an open field, some wearing fatigues, but most wearing civilian clothes. Some appeared to have been carrying bags of clothes and bottles of water which were scattered on the ground, suggesting they were moving locations when they were ambushed.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported the killings, saying that 70 rebels were killed in Wednesday's assault.

The Observatory, which has

been documenting Syria's nearly 3-year-old conflict by relying on activists' reports on the ground, says the number of those killed likely will rise because 89 rebels have been reported missing.

An army colonel told Al-Mayadeen that his troops acted on intelligence and the rebels lost "more than 150 men" in the assault. Syrian army tanks and armored personnel carriers were seen in the broadcast as were soldiers patrolling on foot.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Car repossession leads to chase, shooting

KS ANTHONY — A south-central Kansas man is jailed after he allegedly chased people repossessing his car, then shot at the vehicle, forced it off the road and hit the man who was seizing the car.

Police said an employee of Xpress Recovery of Wichita repossessed the car from a home near Anthony Monday. The car's owner allegedly followed the vehicle, rammed it several times and forced it off the road. The man and a juvenile then allegedly shot at the car's windshield, pulled the driver out and hit him with a gun.

The driver suffered minor injuries.

Google Glass sparks altercation at bar

CA SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco police are trying to identify three suspects in an altercation over Google's new Internet-connected, head-mounted computer at a city bar.

Police spokesman Albie Esparza said a woman told investigators the suspects thought she was recording them with Google Glass while she was at the bar in the city's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood around 1:45 a.m. Saturday.

One of them allegedly took the glass and ran off. The woman said she was able to retrieve it, but her purse and cellphone were stolen.

Proposal to raise speed limits clears Senate

ID BOISE — A bid to increase speed limits on Idaho roads raced to a victory on the Senate floor, as lawmakers voted 30-4 to send it to the House.

Legal speeds would jump from 75 to 80 mph on the interstate and from 65 to 70 mph on state highways, if Idaho Transportation Department signs off.

Sen. Bart Davis, an Idaho Falls Republican and the bill's sponsor, denied being motivated by a personal desire to step on the gas, telling senators he typically drives "like an old man."

Man accused of using toddler as shield

CO GREELEY — An alleged gang member is accused of using a toddler as a shield during a standoff with Greeley police, according to court documents.

The standoff happened Saturday at the apartment of Michael Mendez's ex-wife. According to an arrest affidavit, the 31-year-old broke into the apartment through a balcony door on Feb. 7, punched her and grabbed a 10-inch kitchen knife, and said " ... they will have to take me out before I go back to jail," The Tribune reported. Police returned to the apartment the next day to follow up and learned Mendez was in a bedroom where three children were sleeping. When they entered, police found Mendez holding an 18-

THE CENSUS

100

The number of years beloved Philadelphia bakery Tastykake has been in business. Tastykake marked its 100th anniversary Tuesday with — what else? — birthday cake. Employees also planned 100 deliveries of tasty sweets to charities and first responders throughout the city. In addition, the snack company introduced a limited edition Birthday Cake Cupcake.



297

The number of whales spotted during a 15-minute weekend counting period. About 900 volunteers collected data for the count, coordinated by the Hawaiian Island Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Sanctuary programs administrator Fiona Langenberger said a total of 297 whales were seen during the 9:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. period. She said that was the most of any time period during Saturday's count, involving 58 sites reporting data.



JEFF WHEELER, (MINNEAPOLIS) STAR TRIBUNE/AP

Yoga enthusiasts brave snow for 'snowga'

A couple dozen hardy souls braved temperatures in the teens to practice yoga in the snow this week on the Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis. The event at Piazza on the Mall was intended to draw attention to American Heart Month. "We did it to get people to move outside and show that we're a healthy and happy community," said Yess Yoga owner Lucia Yess, who led the practice.

month-child in one hand and a window frame with broken glass in the other. According to the affidavit, Mendez demanded that police shoot and kill him and held the window frame near the child's head.

A negotiator was able to get him to drop the glass and then officers grabbed the child. The toddler suffered minor injuries.

Cold weather delaying start of maple season

CT HEBRON — The polar vortex has some Connecticut maple syrup producers vexed.

The maple syrup season, normally well underway in Connecticut by now, has been delayed as colder than normal daytime temperatures in January and February have kept the sap from running in the sugar maples.

Many producers didn't start tapping trees until this past weekend, when daytime temperatures

allowed the sap to flow.

Mark Harron, the president of the Maple Syrup Producers Association of Connecticut, said the usual six-to-eight week season may only last a month this year.

Spelling bee hits snag, runs out of words

MO KANSAS CITY — After 19 rounds in a Missouri county's annual spelling bee over the weekend, only two of the 25 contestants who started the competition remained.

Several hours and 47 rounds later, an 11-year-old and her 13-year-old adversary had used up all of the available words, forcing organizers of the Jackson County Spelling Bee to temporarily halt the showdown.

"It was legendary," said Mary Olive Thompson, a library outreach manager and co-coordinator of the Saturday spelling bee.

Sophia Hoffman, a fifth-grader at Highland Park Elementary

School in the Kansas City suburb of Lee's Summit, and Kush Sharma, a seventh-grader at Frontier School of Innovation in Kansas City, buzzed through the list of words provided by the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Then they ran through a list of about 20 additional words bee officials picked out of their Merriam-Webster's 11th Edition during the lunch break, The Kansas City Star reported.

But bee officials decided not to pull more words from the dictionary because they worried it wouldn't be fair.

Plus, Thompson said, at "about 2 o'clock, I think we were all really tired."

Saturday's competition went 66 rounds, she said, while last year's bee ended after only 21.

"Scherzo," "fantoccini" and "intaglio" were among the words Kush correctly spelled in the late rounds, while Sophia nailed words such as "schadenfreude," "mahout" and "barukhzy."

Man gets prison for grave-digger thefts

NE COLUMBUS — A Columbus man who was called a grave robber for stealing ornamental vases and military veterans' nameplates from local cemeteries has been given up to eight years in prison.

Steven Bequette was sentenced last week in Platte County District Court, the Columbus Telegram said.

Online court records say Bequette had pleaded no contest to drug possession and to attempted theft after making a deal with prosecutors, who lowered the theft charge.

At least 40 families were victimized by the graveyard thefts at Roselawn, All Saints and Columbus cemeteries. Court documents say the vases and grave markers were valued at \$10,125.

Bequette asked the judge for probation and a chance to pay restitution.

From wire reports

FACES

No Oscar not needed

For Whitaker, acting about the craft, not awards

By JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.

The Associated Press

Forest Whitaker isn't bothered by being one of the season's biggest Oscar snubs. Although he's won an Academy Award and a Golden Globe, it's always been about the craft for the veteran actor. Repeated comments that he deserved a nomination for his leading role in "Lee Daniels' The Butler" and for "Fruitvale Station," which he co-produced, just roll off him.

"I've been doing this for years and my goal is purely to expand the human experience, to expand myself and connection with other people," he said. "It's always nice when people celebrate me or my work. But that's not my real marker. It's seems to be more of a marker for others."

Sure, Whitaker was disappointed that "Fruitvale Station" wasn't among the nine Oscar nominees for best picture. But he ultimately felt the film didn't need a nomination or an award to validate its success. It was "beautifully done," he says.

"It was some great performances, and I think people did acknowledge my work," he said. "As far as nominations, you really just can't allow yourself to get caught up."

"The Butler," "Fruitvale Station," "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" and nine-time nominee "12 Years a Slave" were among last year's acclaimed films about black racial struggles.

While gratified by Hollywood's attention to these issues, Whitaker is hopeful black actors will also be cast in more natural, colorblind roles in films that go beyond a racial theme or ethnic marketing strategy.

"In my career, probably maybe 80 percent of the time, I've been playing characters that had no

ethnicity or different culture," Whitaker said. "So I've been lucky."

There's no question Whitaker's characters have been diverse — from his assassin in 2000's "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai" to his Oscar-winning portrayal of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in 2006's "The Last King of Scotland."

Whitaker took on a new challenge in "Repentance," a psychological thriller opening stateside Friday. He plays bipolar Angel Sanchez, who seeks private treatment from a spiritual adviser, then takes him hostage.

It's also one of Whitaker's darkest roles — a "new territory," as he calls it. To prepare, Whitaker talked with mental patients.

According to cast mates, Whitaker made it seem easy. "He was very focused and specific," said Nicole Ari Parker, who plays Whitaker's wife. "It was almost easy to be in a scene with him because he was so powerful. ... It was wonderful."

The story is based on Philippe Caland's 2012 film "The Guru and the Gypsy," which featured a cast of mostly white characters. But Whitaker wanted to remake the movie with an all-black cast. The movie also stars Anthony Mackie, Sanaa Lathan and Mike Epps.

"I thought it was a brilliant idea," said Caland. "It allowed my film to be its own project that became bigger. He helped reinvent my movie rather than remake it."

Actor Forest Whitaker isn't up for an Oscar this year, but he says he doesn't mind. 'My goal is purely to expand the human experience, to expand myself and connection with other people,' Whitaker says.

MATT SAYLES, INVISION/AP



As I Lay Dying singer admits seeking wife's murder

The Associated Press

The lead singer of Grammy-nominated metal band As I Lay Dying pleaded guilty Tuesday to trying to hire someone to kill his estranged wife.

Timothy Lambesis, 32, remains free on \$2 million bond until he is sentenced May 2 on one count of solicitation of murder in Vista Superior Court, north of San Diego.

Lambesis was recorded telling an undercover agent that he wanted his wife killed, according to prosecutors. The investigation began last April after Lambesis allegedly told a personal trainer at his gym that he wanted to get rid of his wife.

The undercover agent, San Diego County Sheriff's Officer Howard Bradley, testified last year that Lambesis met him at an Oceanside bookstore in May and said he wanted his wife "gone."

Bradley said he asked Lambesis directly if he wanted his wife killed, and the singer replied, "Yes, I do."

Lambesis said his wife, Megan Lambesis, had restricted his visits with their three adopted children after they separated in September 2012. Bradley testified at a preliminary hearing. The singer also told the agent that he was angry that Megan Lambesis would get a large share of his income in a divorce settlement.



Lambesis

Bradley said Lambesis told him at the end of their meeting, "Just to clarify, just so you know, I do want her dead."

As I Lay Dying formed in San Diego in 2000 and has released six albums, including 2007's "An Ocean Between Us," which reached No. 8 on Billboard's charts. A single from the album, "Nothing Left," was nominated for a Grammy for top metal performance.

Meyers' ratings top Fallon's 'Late Night' debut

Nielsen says Seth Meyers is off to a good start hosting NBC's "Late Night." The premiere of "Late Night with Seth Meyers" averaged 3.4 million viewers in "fast official" ratings from Nielsen. NBC says that's the biggest audience for a Monday "Late Night" in nine years. The network says it also beat the 2009 debut of "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon" by more than a half-million viewers.

Fallon began last week as host of "The Tonight Show." On Monday, he drew 6.3 million viewers. That's the largest Monday audience for "Tonight" in four years, when Jay Leno returned as host to replace Conan O'Brien.

BBC drama 'Ripper Street' rescued in Amazon deal

"Ripper Street" has been rescued. The Victorian detective drama was can-

celed by the BBC earlier this year after two seasons because of poor ratings. But after an online campaign by fans, it is returning for a third series through a deal between the British broadcaster and online retailer Amazon.

Filming begins in May on the new series, which will be shown first on Amazon's Prime Instant Video service, before airing on BBC television.

Matthew Macfadyen and Jerome Flynn return as 19th-century police fighting crime in the sordid streets of London's East End.

Other news

■ **Paula Deen's** comeback trail is leading her to the Smoky Mountains of east Tennessee. The controversial Savannah, Ga.-based celebrity cook announced Wednesday she's opening a new restaurant, Paula Deen's Kitchen, in Pigeon Forge, Tenn. A hub for tourists visiting the Dollywood theme park and the nearby Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pigeon Forge draws about 10 million vacationers a year.

■ **Paco de Lucía**, one of the world's greatest guitarists who dazzled audiences with his lightning-speed flamenco rhythms and finger work, has died in Mexico, Spanish officials said Wednesday. He was 66.

■ **Police near Atlanta** say they've decided not to charge Terrance Johnson, a driver for Justin Bieber, with any crimes after a photographer said his camera was stolen during a confrontation with the singer's entourage.



AP

Soundgarden will play March 13 at the iTunes Music Festival.

Soundgarden signs on to iTunes fest at SXSW

Soundgarden will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its landmark album "Superunknown" at South By Southwest.

The Seattle grunge rockers will play "Superunknown" front to back for the first time March 13 when they headline the third night of the iTunes Festival in Austin, Texas.

The band recently announced plans for a multi-disc reissue of "Superunknown" on June 3. The multiplatinum album included the Grammy Award-winning hits "Black Hole Sun" and "Spoonman" and debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200.

From The Associated Press

Stripes

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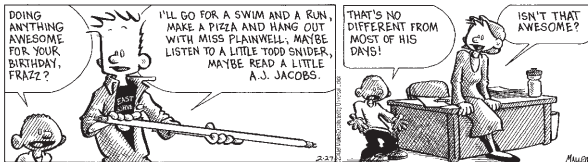
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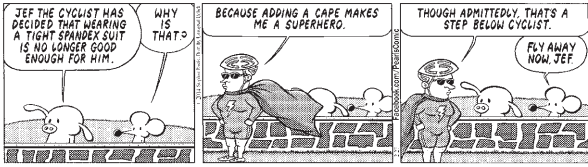
Frazz



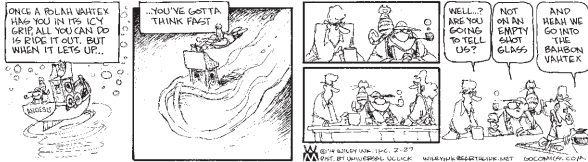
Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



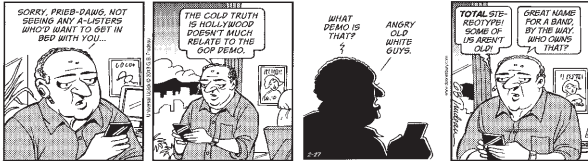
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Get Fuzzy



Doonesbury



Fort Knox



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14	
15					16				17	
18								19	20	
		21			22	23				
24	25	26			27			28	29	30
31					32				33	
34					35	36			37	
		38			39			40		
41	42							43		44
47					48	49	50			
51					52				53	
54					55					

ACROSS

- Last year's frosh
- Sleeping, perhaps
- Junior
- Malaria symptom
- Below
- Ostrich's cousin
- Della Street, for instance
- Castilian hero, with "El"
- Fitting
- Overact
- Kipling poem
- Cook-wear?
- Equitable
- 2013 Joaquin Phoenix movie
- Bloodhound's clue
- Noun-to-verb suffix
- Past
- Shade provider
- Yoopers' home st.
- Disenumber
- Probability
- Appearance
- Indefinite article
- Cousteau's gear
- Baffler
- Spacecraft compartment
- Modular, as a sofa
- Hearty brew
- Press
- Peacekeeping org.
- Crazed

DOWN

- Lip
- Curved molding
- Brownish purple
- Loner
- Bohemian
- Slithery squeezer
- Corn spike
- Laundromat fixture
- Unwanted email
- Backed a motion
- Leave out
- Undraped
- Sprite
- Cattle call?
- Backing
- Incite
- Muppet master
- Submachine gun
- In isolation
- "Behold!"
- On in years
- Really ad abbr.
- Fireplace ledge
- Toppers for Whoppers
- Refuge
- Blackbird
- Unwanted email
- Pop choice
- Sicilian spouter
- Summertime pest
- Partner
- Greatly
- Round stat
- Gear tooth

Answer to Previous Puzzle

T	A	L	C	D	I	P	S	M	E	W
A	L	O	E	I	N	A	P	E	R	I
M	E	R	C	H	A	N	T	U	R	A
S	E	N	I	O	R	C	E	R	I	S
L	E	I	H	O	R	N				
A	R	M	D	E	B	N	E	G	U	S
D	E	E	M	S	I	C	D	U	K	E
S	C	R	A	M	B	A	D	E	E	N
	E	T	A	L	B	R	O			
I	O	D	I	N	E	A	U	N	T	I
O	T	I	S	M	E	R	M	A	I	D
W	I	T	S	O	W	E	I	V	E	S
A	C	H	E	N	E	T	R	O	S	E

2-27

CRYPTOQUIP

N C F S H S H R O F J D H S O T Q
N B J Z G V B G T M M B J V C D X G F R A
H S U C D G N D A F , D ' U G H Q

C F ' G X H Z D S O U D S H J A B J V N B .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THAT GUY IS REALLY WILD ABOUT FRUIT PIES WITH CRUST ON TOP. HE'S DEFINITELY A COBBLER GOBLER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals H

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AMERICAN LEAGUE	W	L	Pct
Baltimore	0	0	0.000
Boston	0	0	0.000
Chicago	0	0	0.000
Cleveland	0	0	0.000
Detroit	0	0	0.000
Houston	0	0	0.000
Kansas City	0	0	0.000
New York	0	0	0.000
Oakland	0	0	0.000
Tampa Bay	0	0	0.000
Texas	0	0	0.000
Toronto	0	0	0.000

NATIONAL LEAGUE	W	L	Pct
Arizona	0	0	0.000
Atlanta	0	0	0.000
Chicago	0	0	0.000
Cincinnati	0	0	0.000
Colorado	0	0	0.000
Los Angeles	0	0	0.000
New York	0	0	0.000
Philadelphia	0	0	0.000
Pittsburgh	0	0	0.000
San Diego	0	0	0.000
San Francisco	0	0	0.000
St. Louis	0	0	0.000
Washington	0	0	0.000

Note: Split-squad games color-coded. Standings: games against non-major leagues do not count.

Wednesday's games
Detroit vs. Atlanta at Kissimmee, Fla.
Cincinnati vs. Atlanta at Bradenton, Fla.
Toronto vs. Philadelphia at Clearwater, Fla.
Cincinnati vs. San Francisco at Scottsdale, Ariz.
Cincinnati vs. Cleveland at Goodyear, Ariz.
L.A. Dodgers vs. Arizona at Scottsdale, Ariz.

Thursday's games
Philadelphia vs. Cincinnati at Duncannon, Pa.
Pittsburgh vs. N.Y. Yankees at Tampa, Fla.
Atlanta vs. Detroit at Lakeland, Fla.
Detroit (ss) vs. Philadelphia at Glendale, Ariz.
Cincinnati (ss) vs. Chicago Cubs at Mesa, Ariz.
Cleveland vs. Cincinnati at Goodyear, Ariz.
San Diego vs. Seattle at Peoria, Ariz.
Milwaukee vs. Oakland at Phoenix, Ariz.
Texas vs. Kansas City at Surprise, Ariz.

Friday's games
Minnesota vs. Boston at Fort Myers, Fla.
Miami vs. St. Louis at Jupiter, Fla.
Detroit (ss) vs. Philadelphia at Glendale, Ariz.
Pittsburgh vs. Tampa Bay at Clearwater, Fla.
Yankees vs. Detroit (ss) at Lakeland, Fla.
Pittsburgh vs. Toronto at Duncannon, Pa.
Washington vs. N.Y. Mets at Port St. Joe, Fla.
Seattle vs. San Diego at Peoria, Ariz.
Chicago Cubs vs. L.A. Angels at Tempe, Ariz.
Milwaukee vs. San Francisco (ss) at Scottsdale, Ariz.
Cincinnati vs. Cleveland at Goodyear, Ariz.
San Francisco (ss) vs. Oakland at Peoria, Ariz.
Kansas City vs. Texas at Surprise, Ariz.
Chicago White Sox vs. L.A. Dodgers at Glendale, Ariz.
Colorado vs. Arizona at Scottsdale, Ariz.
Houston vs. Atlanta at Kissimmee, Fla.

AP spotlight

Feb. 27
1955 — Boston's Red Sox pitched 62-57 at Providence, R.I., a game that set records for fewest points scored by one team, and by both teams in the reduction of the 24-second clock.
1956 — Florida's Jackie Murray becomes the first female jockey to win a Grade 1 stakes in North America when she captures the Widener International Handicap aboard Lord Darnley at Hialeah (Fla.).
1992 — Prairie View wins an NCAA Division I basketball game for most defeats in one season (10) against Mississippi Valley State in the first round of the Southwest Athletic Conference tournament.
1993 — Prairie View's 0-28 mark breaks the record of 27 losses shared by four teams.

College basketball

Tuesday's men's scores

EAST	W	L	Pct
Bentley 80, Franklin Pierce 66			
Bloomfield 82, Caldwell 75			
Castleton 32, 128, New England 68			
Denbury 89, 171, Fall River 63			
Dominican (NY) 72, Nyack 60			
Emerson 69, 171, Fall River 63			
E. Nazarene 81, Wentworth Tech 78			
Farmington 42, St. Joseph's (IL) 57			
Family 73, Chesapeake Hill 61			
LIU Brooklyn 80, Sacred Heart 75			
LeMoyne 60, Pace 53			
Merrimack 67, St. Michael's 59			
N.C. Central 101, 127, 101, 101			
New Haven 70, Adelphi 67			
North 73, W. New England 54			
Old Westbury 81, Sage 61			
Connecticut 96, American International 73			
S. Hampshire 71, Assumption 62			
Saint Joseph's 79, Dayton 53			
St. Anselm 78, Stonethiel 75			
St. Peter's 63, Fairfield 62			
St. Vincent 73, Thiel 61			
Xavier 65, St. John's 63			
SOUTH	W	L	Pct
Duke 66, Virginia Tech 48			
Florida 57, Vanderbilt 54			
Georgia 74, Missouri 56			
Hampden-Sydney 104, Roanoke 82			
John C. Smith 89, Virginia Union 85, OT			
Trinity Wesleyan 78, Kentucky 77			
Liberty 90, Longwood 76			
Mount Olive 75, Barton 72			
St. Francis 79, Chowan 73			
Way Forest 62, Clemson 57			
WV 79, Delaware 64			
MIDWEST	W	L	Pct
Cleveland 51, Youngstown St. 69, OT			
DePaul 55, Seton Hall 60			
Evansville 80, DePaul 60			
Ill.-Chicago 80, Milwaukee 58			
Indiana 80, Iowa 66			
Missouri 37, 72, Loyola of Chicago 56			
Bradley 67, Indiana 66			
Wisconsin 69, Indiana 58			
Wright 67, Valparaiso 58			
SOUTHWEST	W	L	Pct
Arizona 80, 80, 80, 80, 80, 80, 80, 80			
Houston Baptist 107, Arlington Baptist 55			
Kansas 60, 60, 60, 60, 60, 60, 60, 60			
FAIR PLAY	W	L	Pct
Air Force 55, Wyoming 53			
Nebraska 107, 107, 107, 107, 107, 107, 107, 107			
San Diego 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50			

TOURNAMENTS
KIAC Conference
Hanover 78, Franklin 70
Northwest 75, 75, 75, 75, 75, 75, 75, 75
KIAC Conference Tournament
First Round
Alcega 72, Brescia 71, OT
Berea 62, Ashby 79
St. Joseph's 66, Indiana-East 78
Indiana-Southwest 39, Point Park 94

Men's schedule

Thursday	W	L	Pct
New Hampshire (ss) at Albany (NY)			
Robert Morris at Fairleigh Dickinson			
St. Joseph's at Fordham			
Binghamton at Hartford			
LIU Brooklyn			
Maine at Mass.-Lowell			
Sacred Heart at Mount St. Mary's			
St. John's at Penn St.			
St. Francis (NY) at St. Francis (Pa.)			
Stony Brook at Wagner			
Duquesne at Vermont			
Siena at Quinnipiac			
Friday	W	L	Pct
UNC Greensboro at Davidson			
Charlotte at East Carolina			
Wofford at Elon			
Georgia Southern at Furman			
Jackieville at Kennesaw St.			
Arkansas at Kentucky			
Dartmouth at Coast at Lipscomb			
North Florida at Mercer			
Western Kentucky			
Marshall at Old Dominion			
St. Francis (Pa.) at Chattanooga			
St. Francis (Ind.) at W. Carolina			
St. Francis (Ky.) at Kentucky			
Marquette at Tennessee at Louisiana Tech			
Tennessee St. at Morehead St.			
Alabama at Alabama at Tennessee-Monroe			
Appalachian St. at Samford			
UAB at UAB			
Murray St. at UT-Martin			
Indiana State at Indiana State			
Abilene Christian at Nichols St.			
St. Joseph's at St. Joseph's			
Stephen F. Austin at New Orleans			
Texas at Louisiana			
Southern at UT-MVU			
Saturday	W	L	Pct
Milwaukee at Detroit			
South Dakota at N. Dakota St.			
St. John's at North Dakota			
Green Bay at Oakland			
St. Francis (Pa.) at St. Francis (Ind.)			
Austin Peay at SE Missouri			
St. Joseph's at Saint Louis			
IPW at W. Illinois			
Marquette at Marquette			
Hawaii at Indiana			
Southeast	W	L	Pct
Sam Houston St. at Cent. Arkansas			
SAU at Rice			
W. Kentucky at Texas St.			
North Texas at Texas Tech			
Lamar at Oral Roberts			
Georgia St. at Texas Arlington			
Memphis at Houston			
FAR WEST	W	L	Pct
UC at UC			
Sacramento St. at Weber St.			
St. Mary's at St. Mary's			
St. Utah at Montana St.			
Reg. Washington at N. Colorado			
San Diego St. at Utah Valley			
Texas Pan-American at CS Bakersfield			
CS Northridge at CS-Fullerton			
Gonzaga at Pacific			
San Francisco at Pepperdine			
Chicago St. at Seattle			
Utah Valley at Utah Valley			
San Jose State at CS Irvine			
Hawaii at Long Beach St.			

San Jose State at Loyola Marymount
Oregon St. at Southern Cal.

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST	W	L	Pct
American International 70, S. Connecticut 67			
Assumption 74, New Hampshire 51			
Bentley 78, Franklin Pierce 66			
Caldwell 57, Bloomfield 54			
Castleton 72, 72, 72, 72, 72, 72, 72, 72			
Dominican (NY) 81, Nyack 73			
Emerson 69, 171, Fall River 63			
Farmington 42, St. Joseph's (IL) 57			
Family 73, Chesapeake Hill 61			
LIU Brooklyn 80, Sacred Heart 75			
LeMoyne 55, Pace 45			
Merrimack 74, St. Michael's 63			
N.C. Central 101, 127, 101, 101			
New Haven 85, Adelphi 81			
North 73, W. New England 54			
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Connecticut 96, American International 73			
S. Hampshire 71, Assumption 62			
Saint Joseph's 79, Dayton 53			
St. Anselm 78, Stonethiel 75			
St. Peter's 63, Fairfield 62			
St. Vincent 73, Thiel 61			
Xavier 65, St. John's 63			
SOUTH	W	L	Pct
Duke 66, Virginia Tech 48			
Florida 57, Vanderbilt 54			
Georgia 74, Missouri 56			
Hampden-Sydney 104, Roanoke 82			
John C. Smith 89, Virginia Union 85, OT			
Trinity Wesleyan 78, Kentucky 77			
Liberty 90, Longwood 76			
Mount Olive 75, Barton 72			
St. Francis 79, Chowan 73			
Way Forest 62, Clemson 57			
WV 79, Delaware 64			
MIDWEST	W	L	Pct
Cleveland 51, Youngstown St. 69, OT			
DePaul 55, Seton Hall 60			
Evansville 80, DePaul 60			
Ill.-Chicago 80, Milwaukee 58			
Indiana 80, Iowa 66			
Missouri 37, 72, Loyola of Chicago 56			
Bradley 67, Indiana 66			
Wisconsin 69, Indiana 58			
Wright 67, Valparaiso 58			
SOUTHWEST	W	L	Pct
Arizona 80, 80, 80, 80, 80, 80, 80, 80			
Houston Baptist 107, Arlington Baptist 55			
Kansas 60, 60, 60, 60, 60, 60, 60, 60			
FAIR PLAY	W	L	Pct
Air Force 55, Wyoming 53			
Nebraska 107, 107, 107, 107, 107, 107, 107, 107			
San Diego 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50			

TOURNAMENTS

KIAC Conference
Hanover 78, Franklin 70
Northwest 75, 75, 75, 75, 75, 75, 75, 75
KIAC Conference Tournament
First Round
Alcega 72, Brescia 71, OT
Berea 62, Ashby 79
St. Joseph's 66, Indiana-East 78
Indiana-Southwest 39, Point Park 94

Women's schedule

Abilene Christian at Nichols St.			
St. Joseph's at St. Joseph's			
Tennessee Tech at E. Kentucky			
Western St. at Western St.			
Wake Forest at Duke			
Incarinate World at McNeese St.			
Stephen F. Austin at New Orleans			
Alabama at Auburn			
Marquette at ETSU			
Georgia Tech at Florida St.			
Coastal Carolina at Gardner-Webb			
Charleston Southern at Presbyterian			
University at Radford			
Georgia at South Carolina			
North Florida at St. S. Joseph's			
Alabama at Auburn			
Marquette at ETSU			
Clemson at Virginia Tech			
Georgia Tech at Florida St. & Mary			
High Point at Winthrop			
Coastal Carolina at Gardner-Webb			
Kentucky at Charleston's Coast			
Georgia at Vanderbilt			
Tennessee at LSU			
MIDWEST			
Toledo at St. Joseph's			
Cleveland St. at Oakland			
Ball St. at Bowling Green			
Ball St. at Cent. Michigan			
Nebraska at Iowa			
Nebraska Omaha at IUPUI			
Ohio St. at Iowa			
North Carolina at Notre Dame			
Buffalo at Ohio			
Missouri at Wright St.			
Missouri St. at S. Illinois			
Missouri at Youngstown St.			
UT Martin at E. Illinois			
Missouri at Minnesota			
Missouri at Missouri			
Nebraska at Nebraska			
N. Dakota at South Dakota			

NHL

Picking up the pieces



PHOTOS BY CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin looks from the bench during practice on Tuesday in Arlington, Va.

Ovechkin, Backstrom back with Caps after sting of Olympic disappointments

By JOSEPH WHITE
The Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — Alex Ovechkin apologized for Russia's hockey performance at the Olympics, a sentiment put in perspective by the encouraging news that his father was on the way home after heart surgery.

Far more upset was Nicklas Backstrom, who remains clearly miffed that an allergy medication he's taken for years cost him a chance to play for a gold medal.

The Washington Capitals held their first post-Olympics practice Tuesday, a session overshadowed by residue from the Winter Games even as they tried to focus on the rest of their NHL schedule.

Ovechkin was one of the faces of Sochi, bent on winning the gold on home ice. Instead, the Russians were eliminated in the quarterfinals for the second consecutive Olympics.

"First of all, I want to say sorry to the fans," Ovechkin said. "Because it's once in a

lifetime opportunity to represent your country in the Olympics, and you didn't get the results, you didn't get any medal. Of course the fans, the media and the people who support Russia, family, was upset, but life goes on."

Ovechkin took the Olympic disappointment especially hard four years ago, but this time he had to immediately turn his attention to his family. His father, who has a history of heart problems, became ill and required surgery. Ovechkin wasn't told until three days later, after Russia had been eliminated by Finland.

"Soon as I found out that he's in hospital and he's feeling not that good and he could be dying, I just forgot the game that we lost against Finland. ... Just go there and spend time with him and saw him," Ovechkin said. "It was great feelings to see what's happening and how he's feeling. That's most important thing."

Ovechkin said his father, mother and brother were flying home to Moscow on Tuesday.

The lingering Olympic sting was more evident on the face of Backstrom, who helped lead Sweden to the gold medal game, but was pulled from the lineup shortly before faceoff be-

cause he had failed a doping test. Sweden lost to Canada 3-0.

"I've had allergies for seven years, since I got here," Backstrom said. "Everyone who lives in the Washington area knows how bad it is here. I've been taking Zyrtec-D for the last seven years and I haven't been doing anything differently. I've been playing internationally, in the world championships (and) Olympics before, and so I haven't done anything differently."

An ingredient in the allergy medicine is on the list of banned substances for Olympic competition, but Backstrom said he was told by the Sweden team doctor that he could take one pill a day without triggering a positive test.

"Who do I blame?" Backstrom said. "Well, I followed the doctor's recommendation."

Backstrom said he expects a two-week wait to find out whether he will be awarded his silver medal, which is being held at the International Ice Hockey Federation offices in Zurich.

"Obviously, it's not fun to deal with," Backstrom said. "I don't wish no one to have to go through this, if I'm going to be honest with you. It's not fun. But I've got to look forward to play next game on Thursday. I've got to focus on Washington right now."

'Who do I blame? Well, I followed the doctor's recommendation. Obviously, it's not fun to deal with.'

Nicklas Backstrom
Washington Capitals center

Blues in strong spot coming out of break

By R.B. FALLSTROM
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The secret is out on T.J. Oshie, who showed the world at the Sochi Olympics he's perfected the art of the shootout.

He's among nine Olympians who've rejoined a top contender that doesn't overly rely on razzle-dazzle.

The St. Louis Blues are in prime position for the NHL stretch drive. They lack star power, with no one among the top 25 scorers, but are second overall in the Western Conference and atop the Central Division entering the restart Wednesday at Vancouver.

"We've played awfully well. We've been really resilient all year, we've responded to challenges all year," coach Ken Hitchcock said before the break. "But it's going to really get dialed up when we get back and our players recognize that."

"I think some guys are really looking forward to it."

So far, they've done the franchise proud.

The next few months, they'll be working on solidifying their position and proving they belong against other powers in the conference. They're 3-0 against the defending Stanley Cup champion Blackhawks, but 1-2 against the Kings, 0-3 against the Sharks and 0-2 against the Ducks. The Sharks have outscored them 16-7, the Ducks 8-4.

"I told the players when we come back in March and April, it's for them," Hitchcock said. "They have to really grab it coming back."

The blueprint for success is a defense that's allowed the second-fewest goals. Jaroslav Halak and Brian Elliott have combined for seven shutouts aided by strong support and willing shot blockers throughout the defensive rotation.

Oshie and Alexander Steen are

ried for the team scoring lead at 46 points, Steen's total coming in 46 games due to a lengthy concussion-related absence. There's plenty of depth with six players scoring at least 14 goals and Alex Pietrangelo is the first defenseman in franchise history and first in the NHL since Dion Phaneuf (2005-08) to record 40 or more points in each of his first three seasons.

They've been dominant without much of a power play lately, entering the break in an 0-for-20 skid that included numerous failures with the two-man advantage.

The Blues must regain their stride quickly after the break with 12 games in 22 days and never more than one day off rest. They've played the fewest games in the Western Conference and have three games in hand on the Ducks, first overall, and Blackhawks, who like St. Louis have 94 points.

"It's really going to be like coming out of the lockout where everybody is full-till and every point means something down the stretch," defenseman Barret Jackman said. "It's going to be about the mental focus coming back and being the team that doesn't crack in those one-goal games."

The Blues got a taste of the pressure going to overtake the last four games prior to the Olympics. They won three of them, with Oshie providing a preview of his Sochi show with four shootout goals to drive the United States past Russia in a preliminary round game.

Stateside, Oshie scored in overtime to beat the Bruins, scored in the shootout to help beat the Jets and had a goal and assist against the Senators and then scored again in the shootout in a 5-4 loss.

"We came through some injuries, sickness, like a lot of teams have gone through," Jackman said. "But we're still one of the top teams in the league and that's a pretty good feeling."



CHRIS LEE, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH/MCT

St. Louis right winger T.J. Oshie, right, led the Blues to first place in the Central Division at the Olympic break and the second-best record in the Western Conference.

NHL

Sabres' Miller overcomes jetlag to beat Hurricanes

By JOHN WAWROW
The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Ryan Miller was more concerned about overcoming jetlag than thinking about providing a memorable send-off in what could potentially have been one of the goalie's final games for the Buffalo Sabres.

A little over a day after returning to Buffalo from the Sochi Games, and with his future in Buffalo uncertain, Miller stopped 36 shots and even contributed to the offense with two assists in a 3-2 win over the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday night in the NHL's first game after its Olympic break.

"I wasn't really getting to far ahead or thinking about that kind of stuff," Miller said when asked about his future.

Before the game, general manager Tim Murray acknowledged he's shopping the goalie with the intention of dealing him before the league's trade deadline on March 5. Miller is on the trading block because he's in the final year of his contract and Murray is unsure whether the 33-year-old is prepared to re-sign with a team that's rebuilding through youth.

"I'm trying to take the approach to take things as they come right now and be positive and play hockey," Miller added. "It's a lot of fun to play and win. I'm going to try to enjoy these kind of moments where you can help make a difference."

Despite feeling "a little bit goofy" from jetlag, Miller was certainly the difference by stopping the first 20 shots he faced in a game in which Buffalo was out-

shot 38-18.

"It just shows what kind of goaltender we have in Ryan Miller," interim coach Ted Nolan said. "I don't think we had too much reason to say we were the better team tonight outside of Ryan Miller stealing that game for us."

Christian Ehrhoff scored twice, including the go-ahead goal with 44 seconds left. Tyler Ennis also scored for Buffalo, which snapped a four-game skid, and won for only the third time in its last 14 games (3-8-3).

Both of Miller's assists came on Ehrhoff's goals. That made him the NHL's first goalie to have that many since Vancouver's Cory Schneider had two in a 5-4 overtime loss to Tampa Bay on Dec. 11, 2010, according to STATS.

Ehrhoff's decisive goal came

after he circled the Hurricanes' net, and then stopped and spun in the right circle, where he attempted to feed the puck through the crease to teammate Marcus Foligno. The puck instead glanced off the stick of Hurricanes defenseman Justin Faulk and floated in over goaltender Cam Ward.

Eric Staal and Alexander Semin scored for the Hurricanes, who lost to Buffalo in regulation for the first time in seven meetings, dating to a 1-0 loss at Carolina on Nov. 18, 2011.

Hurricanes coach Kirk Muller found little fault in his team's performance.

"Miller was the first star, and there's your answer right there," Muller said. "That was a complete, solid game on our part for 60 minutes. We did everything we had to do."



GARY WIEPERT/AP

Buffalo Sabres' Marcus Foligno celebrates the game-winning goal over Carolina Hurricanes goaltender Cam Ward (30) on Tuesday in Buffalo, N.Y.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	57	37	16	4	78	176	125
Tampa Bay	58	33	20	5	71	168	145
Montreal	59	32	21	6	70	148	142
Toronto	60	32	22	6	70	178	182
Detroit	58	29	22	6	64	151	153
Ottawa	59	26	22	11	63	169	191
Florida	58	22	28	7	51	129	183
Buffalo	58	16	34	8	40	113	174

Metroplex Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Pittsburgh	58	40	15	3	83	186	138
N.Y. Rangers	59	32	24	3	67	155	146
Philadelphia	58	29	23	6	68	152	157
Columbus	58	29	24	5	63	170	161
Washington	59	27	27	5	63	171	175
Carolina	58	26	23	9	61	146	161
New Jersey	59	24	22	13	61	135	146
N.Y. Islanders	60	22	30	8	52	146	200

Western Conference

Central Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
St. Louis	57	39	12	6	84	196	135
Chicago	60	35	11	14	84	207	153
Colorado	58	37	16	5	79	174	153
Minnesota	59	31	21	7	69	145	147
Dallas	58	27	21	10	64	164	164
Winnipeg	60	28	26	6	62	168	175
Nashville	59	25	29	10	60	146	180

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Anaheim	60	41	18	1	87	196	147
San Jose	59	37	16	6	80	175	142
Los Angeles	59	33	22	6	68	158	128
Phoenix	58	27	21	10	64	163	169
Vancouver	60	27	24	9	63	146	160
Calgary	58	22	29	7	51	137	179
Edmonton	60	20	33	7	47	153	199

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss.

No games scheduled

Tuesday's game

Buffalo 3, Carolina 2

Wednesday's games

Boston at Buffalo

Detroit at Montreal

Los Angeles at Colorado

St. Louis at Vancouver

Thursday's games

Columbus at New Jersey

Toronto at N.Y. Islanders

Chicago at N.Y. Rangers

San Jose at Philadelphia

Montreal at Pittsburgh

Detroit at Ottawa

Washington at Florida

Tampa Bay at Nashville

Phoenix at Winnipeg

Carolina at Dallas

Los Angeles at Calgary

Minnesota at Edmonton

Friday's games

San Jose at Buffalo

Phoenix at Colorado

Minnesota at Vancouver

St. Louis at Anaheim

Tuesday

Sabres 3, Hurricanes 2

Carolina	0	1	1-2
Buffalo	3	1	2-3
Second Period —1, Buffalo, Ehrhoff 5 (Stafford, Miller), 5:54 (pp). 2, Carolina, E.Staal 15 (Faulk), 16:52.			
Third Period —3, Buffalo, Ennis 14 (Moulson, Stafford), 12:13; 4, Carolina, Semin 15 (Sekera), 16:00; 5, Buffalo, Ehrhoff 6 (Miller), 19:16.			
Shots on Goal—Carolina 11-10-17—38. Buffalo 5-4-9—18.			
Power-play opportunities —Carolina 0 of 5; Buffalo 1 of 3.			
Goalies —Carolina, Ward 6-8-5 (18 shots-15 saves). Buffalo, Miller 15-22-3 (38-36).			

A-18,719 (19,070). T-2:25.

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BOXING

Hardheaded

Near-fatal assault won't keep Casal from chasing his dream



By JOHN WAWROW
The Associated Press

TNIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. here's a thunderbolt-shaped scar on the back of Nick Casal's head, and a poster promoting a title fight that never occurred on the wall next to the light welterweight's practice ring.

These are among the reminders Casal carries from the time he nearly lost his life after being clubbed repeatedly to the head and body by a crowbar-wielding assailant two years ago. And these unlikely souvenirs also serve as motivation for Casal as he prepares to re-enter the ring in a bid to restart what had been a promising career.

"We put that up as a reminder," Casal said Sunday, pointing to the poster of the World Boxing Organization inter-

continental title bout in which he was supposed to face Ruslan Provodnikov in June 2012. "It's just a reminder of where I was at, and that's where I'm going to get back to."

The first step is set to begin Thursday, when the 28-year-old Casal (22-4-1) is scheduled to fight Shakha Moore (11-19-3) at the Niagara Falls Conference and Events Center.

"It means a lot," Casal said. "I just want to do it for myself. I was getting ready, lined up for a big fight when, obviously, that happened."

He is referring to what happened in the early hours of May 12, 2012. That's when Casal was awoken by a call from his girlfriend, asking him to meet her at a nearby home in the town of Niagara. What Casal didn't know until he arrived was the home belonged to her ex-boyfriend, Michael Vicki.

As Casal and his girlfriend were

preparing to leave, he was struck with a crowbar from behind by Vicki. Casal turned to defend himself but was eventually struck at least 15 times before being left on the side of the road.

Casal spent three hours in surgery. Doctors required more than 200 stitches to close several gashes, including one on the back of his head and another on his right temple. His tooth was chipped and his arm severely swollen, but not broken.

Remarkably, tests revealed Casal's skull was not fractured.

Vicki pleaded guilty to attempted first-degree assault last April, and was sentenced to five years in prison.

Casal, by comparison, was already long into planning his comeback.

Ray Casal, who also serves as his son's trainer, determined the best course of action was to take it slowly.

"I think he deserves to be eased in. But I found in 40 years of doing this that no fight's easy. And this might be his most difficult fight," Casal said. "But, I have confidence in my son in that corner. Otherwise, I don't think I would be able to work the corner."

'I have confidence in my son in that corner. Otherwise, I don't think I would be able to work the corner.'

Ray Casal

Father of light welterweight boxer Nick Casal

Light welterweight Nick Casal trains at Casal's Boxing Gym in Niagara Falls, N.Y., on March 2, 2011. A little less than two years after he was assaulted on the street and sustained severe head lacerations, Casal is planning a return to the ring. On Thursday, he'll face Shakha Moore.

DAN CAPELLEZZO, THE NIAGARA GAZETTE/AP

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MLB

Tulowitzki: Winning will stop Jeter talk

Rockies shortstop would prefer to stay put

By Mike Cranston
The Associated Press

TROY TULOWITZKI grew up idolizing Derek Jeter. It's the reason he wears No. 2.

Now Tulowitzki hears daily chatter about possibly taking over for the retiring Jeter at shortstop in New York.

"I take it as an honor for someone to think of myself as someone that possibly could replace him," Tulowitzki said Tuesday.

That doesn't mean the three-time All-Star wants to leave Denver. It's just that he knows after four straight years out of the playoffs, after all the injuries that have sidelined him, this season could determine his future.

"I'd love to stay here my whole career," Tulowitzki said. "But I know if you lose, other teams may be calling or things might happen."

The 29-year-old Tulowitzki still has seven years left on a \$157.5 million contract that runs through the 2020 season. It's a figure that will weigh on the Rockies if they don't contend soon.

It's also a price tag the Yankees could absorb as they look to replace Jeter, who announced earlier this month he'll retire at the end of the season.

"I know that right now I'm wearing a Rockies uniform and my job is to prepare and try to have the best season that I can and we can as a team," Tulowitzki said. "I think if we play good baseball those rumors will go away. But I know if we don't,

they won't go away."

Tulowitzki broke in with the Rockies at the perfect time. He played in a career-high 155 games and hit 24 home runs as a rookie in 2007 when Colorado reached the World Series. They were back in the post-season two years later when he slugged .552.

They haven't been to the playoffs since. And Tulowitzki has played in only 438 of a possible 648 games over the past four seasons. There was a broken wrist, a serious groin injury and broken ribs.

When healthy, Tulowitzki is a feared hitter. He batted .312 with 25 home runs and 82 RBIs in 126 games last season.

Tulowitzki is upbeat this spring, having finally entered camp healthy. He's one of the first players to arrive at the team's spring training complex each morning. He does extra stretching, extra mobility drills and has an extensive routine in hopes he can finally stay injury-free.

"I'm really excited for him this year," Rockies manager Walt Weiss said. "I think he's one of the best players in all the game and I think you'll see that this year."

Tulowitzki also is taking on a much bigger leadership role. With first baseman Todd Helton in retirement after 17 seasons in Colorado, this is now Tulowitzki's team.

"If you look around the locker room, I've worn this uniform the longest of anybody here," he said. "But you can't proclaim yourself a leader and say, 'Hey, this is my club. You do as I say.' I think you go about your work and let guys follow."

'I take it as an honor for someone to think of myself as someone that possibly could replace (Jeter).'

Troy Tulowitzki
Rockies shortstop



DON BOOMER/AP

Colorado's Troy Tulowitzki throws to first to make out on San Diego's Chase Headley during the fourth inning of a game on Sept. 7 in San Diego. With Todd Helton's retirement, the Rockies are Tulowitzki's team. But for how long? Tulowitzki has been hearing the reports he could be Derek Jeter's replacement in New York.

Leader: Lucroy focuses on areas he can improve

FROM BACK PAGE

low," said 6-foot-5 closer Jim Henderson.

"But it's strange. You would think if you miss your spot as a pitcher with that small target you might not get the call," Henderson said. "But somehow he makes it work within the parameters of the plate there, so it's actually amazing how well he does if we screw up."

What Lucroy would like to improve on is throwing out runners. He threw out 21 of 101 potential base stealers for a 20.8 percent success rate, ranking 18th among regular catchers in the majors. Lucroy said he was more successful in the past, but had fallen into "some bad habits" the last few years that he hoped to fix.

The Brewers are confident in Lucroy's abilities. General manager Doug Melvin often singles

him out as one of the top catchers in the game.

No added pressure, Lucroy said.

"You know honestly, I take a lot of pride and a lot of responsibility in being a leader on and off the field, and within the clubhouse," he said. "Hopefully I can do that this year and really contribute."

Lucroy emerged as more of a public presence during last season's turmoil surrounding the suspension of star slugger Ryan Braun for violating Major League Baseball's anti-drug agreement. He's inquisitive with Roenicke. He's an easygoing presence in the clubhouse.

The best catchers must be unselfish, Roenicke said.

"They've got a whole pitching staff to be worried about and (Lucroy) worries about the pitching staff," Roenicke said. "He worries about the whole team."



ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Milwaukee catcher Jonathan Lucroy pets Hank, a stray dog who has become the team's spring training mascot since showing up on Monday in Phoenix.

MLB/SPORTS BRIEFS



ALEX BRANDON/AP

Joe Torre, executive vice president of baseball operations for Major League Baseball, said Tuesday at the San Diego Padres' spring training facility in Peoria, Ariz., that unavoidable contact between a catcher and a baserunner would make banning all home-plate collisions an unrealistic goal. Torre was in Arizona to answer questions by representatives from the eight clubs training in Arizona and address concerns regarding the collision rule and expanded instant replay for umpires.

Torre: Collision ban is unrealistic

By TIM BOOTH
The Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Joe Torre says Major League Baseball's playing rules committee leaned toward banning all home plate collisions, but concluded it would be unrealistic because contact between catchers and baserunners is sometimes unavoidable.

Torre, MLB's executive vice president for baseball operations, spoke Tuesday at San Diego's spring training facility before meeting with representatives from eight clubs training in Arizona. Torre was there to answer questions and address concerns regarding the collision rule, which was announced Monday, and expanded instant replay for umpires.

Torre said when it came to the collisions rule, he had to "put the uniform back on" because there is never a perfect play at the plate and throws can make contact unavoidable. Any rule change for 2014 required approval from the players' union, which negotiated under new head Tony Clark.

"The players' association had their concerns, too, based on the fact that catchers' ... instincts is telling them to do certain things," Torre said. "Tony Clark's concern was it would have been tough to get them used to a new rule in a short period of time. I think we both agreed on the fact we want to eliminate the vicious hit."

MLB could not have implemented the rule this year without approval from the players' association.

In what both sides said was a one-year experiment, the rule allows collisions if the catcher has the ball and is blocking the runner's direct path to home plate,

and if the catcher goes into the baserunner to field a throw to the plate.

The new rule, 7.13, states "a runner attempting to score may not deviate from his direct pathway to the plate in order to initiate contact with the catcher (or other player covering home plate)." A runner violating the rule shall be declared out, even if the fielder drops the ball.

The umpire crew chief can use the new video-review system to determine whether the rule was violated.

Torre referenced the hit on Buster Posey that left the NL MVP with broken bone in his lower left leg and three torn ligaments in his ankle in a May 2011 collision with the Marlins' Scott Cousins. That injury that helped intensify debate over plate collisions.

"At the time I talked to Bruce Bochy several times, and I said I don't see anything we can change," Torre explained. "Well, over the last couple of years I've gotten letters from parents who have kids in the minor leagues, and we've seen some vicious hits in the minor leagues, and it's got to get your attention."

Posey said Tuesday he thought the rule change was positive because it should eliminate worry of a malicious hit.

"I've always said that the main thing is for everybody to be comfortable with it, that the catchers and runners are protected," Posey said.

Torre said there is an onus on baserunners to eliminate a mindset of wanting to separate a catcher from the ball.

"I think definitely the baserunner has to have a different resolve, so to speak, in rounding third or tagging up than third," Torre said.

AP feature writer Don Ketchum in Scottsdale contributed to this report.

Briefly

Trout agrees to 1-year, \$1M contract with Angels

The Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Outfielder Mike Trout and the Angels agreed Wednesday to a \$1 million, one-year contract, a prelude to a long-term deal between the young All-Star and Los Angeles.

The salary is the highest for a one-year major league contract for a player not yet eligible for arbitration who wasn't coming to the big leagues from Japan or Cuba or wasn't required to have a larger amount because of the maximum cut rule.

Trout will become eligible for arbitration after this season and could become a free agent after the 2017 World Series. The sides are thought to be discussing an agreement through 2020 in the \$150 million range.

By agreeing to a one-year contract now with the 22-year-old, the Angels avoid having a long-term deal count toward their 2014 luxury tax payroll.

Trout was voted AL Rookie of the Year and finished second in MVP voting in 2012, when he hit .326 with 30 homers and 83 RBIs, and led the majors with 129 runs and 49 steals. He was second again to Detroit's Miguel Cabrera in MVP voting last year, when he batted .323 with a .432 on-base percentage, 27 homers, 97 RBIs and 33 steals.

In other baseball news: ■ Miami Marlins pitcher Henderson Alvarez missed his first scheduled start of spring training because of an infection in his right shin. Alvarez had the infection drained at a hospital Tuesday. He was at Roger Dean Stadium in Fort Lauderdale Wednesday and walking with the aid of crutches as the Marlins went through their morning workouts.

■ Colorado Rockies starting pitcher Jhoulys Chacin has no structural damage in his troublesome throwing shoulder, but will remain sidelined for at least another week.

■ Jaime Garcia will seek a second opinion on his surgically repaired shoulder from Dr. James Andrews before deciding his next course of action. St. Louis General Manager John Mozeliak said on Tuesday.

■ New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter is scheduled to play Thursday against Pittsburgh in his first spring training game of his final season. Jeter, who turns 40 in June, broke his left ankle in the 2012 AL championship series, then broke it again last spring during his rehabilitation.

■ Heisman Trophy winner Jameis Winston grounded out to second and struck out looking in Florida State's 8-3 loss to the New York Yankees on Tuesday.

■ Brad Ausmus was a winner in his first game as a manager as the Detroit Tigers beat Florida



RICK SCUTEN/AP

The \$1 million, one-year deal signed by the Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout will allow the club more time to work out a long-term contract with their star center fielder.

Southern 12-0 Tuesday in an exhibition matchup.

■ Masahiro Tanaka is scheduled to make his New York Yankees debut Saturday. Tanaka signed a \$155 million, seven-year contract in January.

Eagles, LT Peters agree on 5-year extension

PHILADELPHIA — All-Pro left tackle Jason Peters has agreed to a five-year contract with the Philadelphia Eagles. Peters was signed for 2014 and his new deal adds four years through 2018. The 32-year-old Peters is a six-time Pro Bowl pick and two-time All-Pro.

In other football news:

■ Former NFL star Aaron Hernandez was involved in a scuffle with another jail inmate, but neither man required medical attention, a Massachusetts sheriff said Wednesday.

Former boxing champ killed in Venezuela

CARACAS, Venezuela — Former world champion boxer Antonio Cermeno was kidnapped and killed in his native Venezuela, police said Tuesday.

Cermeno, 44, a WBA super bantamweight and featherweight champion in the 1990s, was found shot to death Tuesday on a road in the central state of Miranda, local police chief Eliseo Guzman said.

Guzman said Cermeno and other relatives were kidnapped Monday night near the La Urbina neighborhood in east Caracas.

The relatives escaped when the kidnappers stopped to refuel the car, but the former boxer remained captive, Guzman said.

Cermeno retired in 2006 with a 45-7 record.

Injured Russian Olympic skier can't feel her legs

MUNICH — Olympic skiercross racer Maria Komissarova of Russia remains confident of walking again despite having no feeling in her legs.

Komissarova writes on Instagram, "I don't feel my body below my navel. But I am strong and I know that I'll be able to stand on my legs again some day."

The 23-year-old Komissarova remains in a Munich rehabilitation center after breaking her spine at the Sochi Winter Games. She will remain there for at least three months, a spokesman for the Russian freestyle ski federation told the Interfax news agency.

Komissarova crashed during a training run on Feb. 15, fracturing the 12th dorsal vertebrae in her lower-middle back. She underwent emergency surgery lasting 6½ hours at Krasnaya Polyana, Russia, a day before being airlifted to Germany for further treatment.

Michigan State rewards Dantonio with pay raise

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Michigan State football coach Mark Dantonio will earn \$3.64 million in annual compensation, up from \$1.99 million, after agreeing to an amended contract following the school's first Rose Bowl win in over a quarter-century.

Athletic director Mark Hollis said nearly \$785,000 also has been allocated to enhance assistant coaching salaries.

Defensive coordinator Pat Narduzzi, who remained with the Spartans despite speculation he might leave for a head coaching job, is now slated to make \$904,583.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Making history

Wichita St. becomes first D-I team to reach 30-0 in regular season

By BILL LIESSE
The Associated Press

PEORIA, Ill. — Wichita State is all alone in the record book.

Again using a balanced offense and tenacious defense, the second-ranked Shockers became the first Division I team to reach 30-0 in the regular season with a 69-49 victory over Bradley on Tuesday night.

"To be the first and only team in college basketball to win 30 without a loss in the regular season," Wichita State coach Gregg Marshall said when asked about his theme for the game. "I realize we're playing more games ... but it has never happened in the regular season."

"So it's a first. And these guys like to be the first, and the best."

Ron Baker had 15 points to lead four Wichita State players in double figures as the Shockers became the 11th team to reach 30-0, the previous 10 all hitting the 30-win mark during postseason play. The last team to reach 30-0 was UNLV in 1990-91. The Runnin' Rebels went 34-0 that season before losing to Duke in the national semifinals.

The Shockers (30-0, 17-0 Missouri Valley Conference) have one more regular-season game, at home Saturday against Missouri State. The last team to finish a regular season unbeaten was Saint Joseph's in 2003-04 at 27-0. The next season, Illinois got

to 29-0 before losing its regular-season finale at Ohio State.

A barrage of three-pointers early in the second half broke it open for Wichita State, which beat Bradley (12-18, 7-10) for the 10th straight time and second this season.

After Bradley trimmed a 10-point halftime deficit to eight, Shockers point guard Fred VanVleet made consecutive threes for a 14-point lead, the visitors' largest to that point. By the 12:50 mark, Cleaunthony Early had added a three-pointer and Baker made two threes off screens for a 50-32 lead.

Wichita State finished the game 11-for-21 from beyond the arc, with four players making two or more. Bradley was 4-for-14.

"End-of-shot-clock threes. That was it," Bradley coach Geno Ford said. "I'm not saying we were going to win, but you hold them to seven offensive rebounds and have just six turnovers? I'll take it."

"The difference was late-shot-clock threes and their length at the basket."

Ford went on to laud the Shockers' defense.

"At the rim, they have unbelievable length," Ford said. "It's length and it comes from anywhere. Even (6-foot-3) Baker."

"They're absolutely terrific at help and recover, and they deny [wing passes]. You can't find five teams in the country with that [combination]."



STEPHEN HAAS/AP

Wichita State guard Nick Wiggins, right, makes a break down the court as Bradley forward Auston Barnes defends during the second half Tuesday in Peoria, Ill. Wichita State won the game 69-49.

Tyshon Pickett finished with 13 points and 15 rebounds for Bradley after nearly reaching a double-double in the first half with 10 points and nine rebounds. Pickett was just 5-for-20 from the field and leading scorer Walt Lemon Jr. was 6-for-20 and had 18 points.

"I hate to get beat on the glass," Marshall said of his team's 37-36 rebound disadvantage. "But [Pickett] was a monster. He beat us to a little."

Tekele Cotton scored 13 points, Early 12 and VanVleet had 11 for

Wichita State, a Final Four participant a year ago. Reserve Darius Carter added nine points and seven rebounds and had one of the Shockers' six blocked shots.

Miserable shooting prevented Bradley from mounting much of a threat. The Braves were at 25 percent (11-for-44) through 30 minutes and finished 16-for-59 (27.1 percent).

Bradley was playing host to its highest-ranked opponent since 1982, when then-No. 2 Wichita State lost 55-47 to the Braves who went on to win the NIT.

The Shockers led 35-25 at halftime after holding the Braves to 8-for-34 shooting (23.5 percent).

The game was a matchup of the top two defensive teams in the conference, though Wichita State (60.8 points per game) leads Bradley (65.5) comfortably. Offensively, Wichita State is also the MVC's best (75.8) while Bradley (63.8) is last.

The No. 2 ranking equals the highest ranking in Wichita State history, matching the 1981-82 team.

Roundup

Florida tops Vanderbilt, earns share of SEC title

The Associated Press



MARK ZALESKI/AP

Florida forward Will Yegute, left, grabs the ball away from Vanderbilt guard Carter Josephs in the second half Tuesday, Feb. 19, in Nashville, Tenn. No. 1 Florida won 57-54.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Dorian Finney-Smith scored 19 points, and No. 1 Florida held off Vanderbilt 57-54 on Tuesday night to clinch at least a share of its second straight Southeastern Conference title and seventh overall.

Patric Young added 12 points for the Gators (26-2, 15-0 SEC), who continued the best season in school history by winning their 20th straight game, and now they will have a chance to claim their third SEC title in four years all to themselves with a win against LSU on Saturday.

The Commodores (15-12, 7-8) beat Florida 83-70 the last time the Gators came into Memorial Gym ranked No. 1, on Feb. 17, 2007. Coach Kevin Stallins only has seven healthy scholarship players right now, and they proved no match for Florida's smothering defense.

Kyle Fuller missed a tying three in the final seconds, and Dai-Jon Parker missed a put-back attempt.

Rod Odom scored 12 points and Parker added 11 as Vanderbilt outshot Florida 48.8 percent (20-for-41) to 40.4 percent (21-for-52).

Fuller's three-point play with 3:16 remaining made it 53-50. Finney-Smith hit a free

throw, then Vanderbilt forced a shot clock violation. Fuller made two free throws with a minute left but Finney-Smith knocked down a three with 30.6 seconds to go for the clinching basket.

No. 6 Duke 66, Virginia Tech 48: Rodney Hood scored 21 points to lead Duke.

Rasheed Sulaimon added 15 points for the host Blue Devils (23-6, 12-4 Atlantic Coast Conference), who jumped to a 24-4 lead midway through the first half and never trailed — though they struggled to land a game-finishing blow on the Hokies.

No. 13 San Diego State 90, San Jose State 64: Winston Shepard, Dwayne Polee II and JJ O'Brien each scored 12 points to lead a balanced offense as host San Diego State breezed past San Jose State.

Coming off their third loss of the season, the Aztecs (24-3, 13-2 Mountain West) had an easy time against the overmatched Spartans (7-20, 1-14).

The Aztecs had dropped seven spots in the poll after losing their second game in two weeks, a 58-44 thumping at New Mexico on Saturday. But the Aztecs didn't lose two in-a-row while preventing San Jose State from winning consecutive outings.

No. 14 Wisconsin 69, Indiana 58: Sam Dekker scored 16 points as host Wisconsin

shrugged off a slow start.

The Hoosiers (15-12, 5-9 Big Ten) held Wisconsin (23-5, 10-5) to its lowest point production in the first half this season, taking a 29-19 lead.

Minnesota 95, No. 20 Iowa 89: Austin Hollins scored a career-high 27 points on 8-for-10 shooting and DeAndre Mathieu had 19 points and seven assists as host Minnesota bounced back from a monthlong slump.

Hollins made all seven of his free throws for the Gophers (18-11, 7-9 Big Ten), who won for just the third time in their last nine games by making 13 of their last 14 free throws over the final 70 seconds.

No. 25 New Mexico 67, Utah St. 58: Cullen Neal scored nine of his 12 points in a decisive run in the second half for host New Mexico.

Cameron Bairstow had 14 points and 10 rebounds for the Lobos (22-5, 13-3 Mountain West) while Alex Kirk added 13 points, 11 rebounds and five assists.

Air Force 55, Wyoming 53: Tre' Coggins scored 20 points and Max Yon added 14, including two late go-ahead free throws, as Air Force held on for the win.

Air Force (11-15, 5-10) won for only the second time in 10 games.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Pick 6: Close conference races

By JOHN MARSHALL
The Associated Press

The Big 12 regular season has ended up as it always seems to: With Kansas on top. With their 83-75 win over Oklahoma on Monday night, the fifth-ranked Jayhawks wrapped up at least a share of their 10th straight Big 12 championship. Only UCLA, with 13 straight Pac-10 titles from 1967-79, and Gonzaga, with 11 straight West Coast Conference titles from 2001-11, have won more consecutive conference titles in Division I history.

Kansas isn't the only team to have a title locked up or close to it.

No. 2 Wichita State, the only undefeated Division I team left, has already cut down the nets to celebrate its Missouri Valley title. No. 10 Saint Louis has a three-game lead with four games left in the A-10, Iona has clinched at least a share of the MAAC, Robert Morris did the same in the Northeast and top-ranked Florida has a comfortable lead over Kentucky in the SEC.

Most of the conference races haven't been decided, though. With two weeks left in the regular season, there's still plenty left up in the air.

Here are six conference races that figure to be interesting down the stretch:



MATT GENTRY, THE ROANOKE TIMES/AP

Virginia's Justin Anderson celebrates as time runs out against Virginia Tech last week. Virginia won 57-53 and is atop the ACC with a 14-1 league record. The Cavaliers can solidify their position Saturday when they play second-place Syracuse.

1 Atlantic Coast Conference. Syracuse appeared to be headed toward a runaway after winning its first 25 games. Things changed quickly when the Orange lost two games last week. Now, No. 12 Virginia is atop the conference with three games left. The Cavaliers are 14-1 in the ACC, a game ahead of Syracuse and three up on No. 6 Duke. The Orange have a chance to gain ground on Saturday, when they play Virginia in Charlottesville.

3 Conference USA. This one could be fun during the closing stretch. Middle Tennessee leads at 11-2, but Southern Miss, Louisiana Tech, UTEP and Tulsa are all lurking right behind at 10-3 with three games left. Saturday's game between Middle Tennessee and LaTech could open things up a bit, but could also make the race even more convoluted. Tulsa plays at UTEP on Thursday. Southern Miss has the easiest remaining schedule. Stay tuned.

4 American Athletic Conference. No. 11 Cincinnati appeared to be headed toward the AAC title after opening conference play 13-1. The Bearcats' 58-57 to No. 7 Louisville on Saturday made things a bit more interesting. Cincinnati, which has three games left, has a half-game lead over Louisville, which still has four left, starting with Thursday's game against Temple. SMU is two games back at 11-4 and Memphis still has an outside shot at 10-4.



NATI HARNIK/AP

Creighton's Doug McDermott, right, drives past Seton Hall's Eugene Teague on Sunday. Creighton won 72-71 to remain in first place in the Big East. The Bluejays lead Villanova by a half-game but face road games at Xavier and Georgetown.

2 Big East. No. 9 Creighton is in control, thanks to a pair of lopsided victories over No. 8 Villanova. There's still some wiggle room for the Wildcats, though. They're a half-game back of the Bluejays at 12-2 and play three of their final four games at home. Creighton plays two of its final three games on the road, against Xavier and Georgetown, two teams vying for NCAA at-large bids.

5 Big South. This one is a wide-open race. VMI and High Point lead the North Division at 10-4, while Coastal Carolina, UNC-Asheville and Gardner-Webb are all 9-5 in the South. Radford and Winthrop also still in it at 8-6. It could sort out a little on Wednesday, when VMI plays at High Point. Then again, it may not. UNC-Asheville hosts Gardner-Webb on Saturday, while Coastal Carolina closes with home games against the bottom teams in the division.

6 WAC. The WAC could come down to Thursday's game between New Mexico State and Utah Valley. Both are tied atop the conference at 10-3 and the Wolverines need a win to gain a split in the season series after losing by 23 in Las Cruces earlier this month. Both teams have two games after that and Grand Canyon, in its first Division I season, could sneak off with the title, sitting at 8-4 with four games left.

SPORTS



Shocking development
Wichita State unbeaten after 30 games | **College basketball, Page 30**

MLB

Not to be overlooked

Lucroy quietly emerging as leader for Milwaukee

By GENARO C. ARMAS
The Associated Press

By the numbers

PHOENIX

The Milwaukee Brewers love the players they have up the middle. Carlos Gomez is a Gold Glove center fielder, and speedy shortstop Jean Segura is one of the majors' best young players.

Then there's catcher Jonathan Lucroy, who has quietly developed into an important cornerstone behind the plate.

Good bat, especially for a catcher. Solid receiver. Emerging leader.

Lucroy is "a different type of guy. He cares about what goes on with this team as much as anybody does," manager Ron Roenicke said. "I'm not saying the other guys don't care, but (Lucroy) is to the point where he tries to help other players, he works with them."

Lucroy was one of the majors' top offensive catchers last season, batting .280 with 18 homers and 82 RBIs. He also had six triples and nine steals, very respectable speed numbers for a catcher.

Speed isn't something that Lucroy specifically worked on last year, though the 27-year-old catcher said he's always worked out with "running guys" and has trained in the past with NFL players.

"Also, too, it comes with running the bases the right way. You don't have to be the fastest guy to be a good base runner," Lucroy said

.280

Batting average of Brewers catcher Jonathan Lucroy last season.

82

Number of runs Lucroy drove in last season. He hit 18 homers, had six triples and nine steals.

20.8

Percentage of potential base stealers Lucroy threw out last season, 18th among catchers.

SOURCE: The Associated Press

Tuesday.

Behind the plate, the 6-foot, 195-pound Lucroy makes the most of a frame that's relatively small for a catcher.

"With that low target he sets up, it's kind of unique with big league catchers. He gets down there

SEE LEADER ON PAGE 28

Did you know

Milwaukee catcher Jonathan Lucroy was taken in the third round of the 2007 amateur draft, 101st overall.

SOURCE: Baseball-reference.com

ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Milwaukee catcher Jonathan Lucroy makes a leaping grab Thursday during spring training in Phoenix.

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